WARBECK OF WOLFSTEIN.

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La fin couronne les œuvres.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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WARBECK OF WOLFSTEIN.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright, warm, blushing evening in the month of July. The villagers of Marchfeldt were rejoicing on the eve of their patron saint, dancing and regaling on the wide and verdant lawn in front of the castle of their feudal lord the young Baron Wilhelm of Marchfeldt, dressed in their holiday gear, and crowned with garlands of living flowers. The young ones tripped to the music of the pipe, the flute, and the mandoline, while the elders of the village reclined beneath the spreading boughs of the acacias that skirted the lawn, rejoicing in reflected joy, and thinking, peradventure, how much more

athletic, alert, and graceful were the dancers of their day. Be this as it may, there was probably nothing invidious in the comparison, since those who had taken their turn in the dance were their own offspring, their children and grand-children; for the Marchfeldt peasantry were a healthy, happy, and long-lived race. Their lord was little less than absolute sovereign of his small territory, but he was mild, merciful, and generous. A long succession of such lords had followed each other; and whoever had talked to these contented vassals of despotism and oppression, would have found it difficult to teach them the meaning of words, now in such popular use. They had one subject of concern and alarm. Their young Baron had been two years at the wars with the famous Vallenstein, Duke of Friedland. Two years had elapsed since he had quitted his castle; he was in his 25th year, and yet unmarried; brothers he had none, and, besides himself, one only

sister, the fair and excellent Louisa of Marchfeldt, was all that remained of that ancient barony. Thus, those who blessed the present dynasty must needs tremble at the danger of being transferred to another line. Lady Louisa was very beautiful: seldom has so much soul beamed from a face whose contour was so perfect; her features might have served for the model of a Grecian artist, while her complexion was that of her own country, the delicate mingling of the rose and the lily; her hair was a pale but bright auburn, so bright that the sun, as she sate on the ramparts of the castle on the evening of the feast of Saint Alexis, made it sparkle like waves of gold. She had no companion but her favourite damsel; the rest, in obedience to her commands, and in compliance with their own inclinations, were gracing the revels below. As she watched with sweet complacency the mirth of which her absent brother's bounty was the source, she breathed a

secret prayer, that every chord in the breast of that beloved brother might vibrate in harmony with the gay and happy group she overlooked, and she wondered when she might hope to see him preside over and encourage such a scene.

"Yet, alas!" said she, as the thought passed over her heart, "why should I be impatient? Father Felix tells me every day, and my own conviction echoes his assurance, that the longer Wilhelm is absent, the more confidently I may hope to see him return to me cured. Hearken, Barbara! do you not hear a horn? Surely, surely, it has the sound of Wilhelm's horn! It cannot be him! He would have despatched a messenger—but yet there is a horn! Oh! let us go to the postern tower."

The postern tower commanded the banks of the river Raab, which rolled deep beneath between steep rocky cliffs; and the castle of Marchfeldt was, on that

side; accessible only by its drawbridge. By the time Lady Louisa had reached the tower, the warder and the few domestics not busy on the lawn were in commotion; they knew the horn, and the silver-headed warder and his assistants hasted to let down the bridge, and give entrance to a much loved lord. A few minutes elapsed, and Lady Louisa, who had darted like lightning down the narrow tower stairs, threw herself into the arms of her only brother, her only natural friend, and wept on his bosom a silent welcome. Their emotion was strong and mutual, but Louisa was the first to recover the confusion of spirits this unexpected event had occasioned.

"Welcome, welcome! dearest Wilhelm!" she cried. But Wilhelm did not speak; he grasped her hand and led her towards the grand staircase, for they were still in the hall of entrance. He waved his hand to the aged warder and

other domestics, who pressed around him with congratulations on his safe return, and they understood his grateful and affectionate, yet mournful look, to say, "I feel your kindness, my friends, but I cannot speak my thanks." His attendant Conrade, who had followed his lord when he left the castle, cast a significant look at old Sigismond, and shook his head.

Lord Marchfeldt led his sister to a small private apartment which overlooked the castle gardens. He walked to the casement, and, leaning his forehead against the bars, seemed oppressed by a strong internal struggle; a struggle beheld with infinite sorrow and disappointment by one who looked to him as her only friend and protector, the sole remaining prop of an ancient and illustrious house. At length he broke the mournful silence which his sister had not dared again to interrupt.

"My imbecility shocks you, Louisa!

and no wonder. It were better to have never returned than to return thus."

"Oh, no, dearest Wilhelm! you are harassed and fatigued; you have travelled far. What body—what mind can resist the temporary consequences of over exertion? Besides, you could not but feel the first moments of your return to Marchfeldt. Indulge the feeling, my brother! To-morrow I will show you what has been done in your name since you left us; I trust our improvements will meet your applause."

He turned from the casement, took her hand and smiled upon her; but it was a smile which smote her to the inmost soul; it spoke of grief, bitter, deep-seated, and irradicable.

"Yes! to-morrow," replied he, in a hopeless tone, "to-morrow we shall be gay perhaps. I have rode hard, and I am a fool!—As I ascended the portal steps a giddiness seized me, but it is

over. Come, Louisa, let us to the western rampart; the warder says it is the feast of St. Alexis. Let me see my people."

"Willingly, willingly, dear Wilhelm! how they will delight to behold you!"

"Strange," murmured the Baron, "that one so joyless can inspire joy."

They proceeded together to the ramparts, and Louisa began to admit a hope that it was really to over fatigue, combined with a natural agitation on returning to his home, from whence the severest sorrow had urged him forth, that the melancholy and languor now so apparent might be ascribed. The moment they appeared upon the rampart, "Long live the noble Wilhelm! God bless our young lord!" echoed through the old ivied walls of the castle, till they appeared to vibrate to the loud and reiterated shouts. A faint glow of satisfaction broke over the pale cheek of the young soldier, as lifting

from his brow the heavy sable cap, he waved it in the air, and cried, "God bless my friends!"

He gazed for a moment with benevolent interest on the long remembered faces turned up to behold him, and repeated fervently, "God bless them!"

Louisa would, indeed, have rejoiced at the happy feeling which this assemblage of faithful vassals seemed to awaken; but Wilhelm had thrown aside the large hussar cap which concealed in some degree his countenance; it was now revealed to her in all its alteration: she beheld his pale hollow cheek, his heavy hopeless eye; she saw too, that a broad band of black crape divided the thick sable of his cap, and another encircled his left arm.

"Three years!" said she, internally, "three years! and still those badges of mourning!"

He remarked the direction of her eye,

and read her thoughts; then again glancing at the throng below, he asked abruptly, "How are Albert Feltheïm and his young wife? Are they happy? Have they children?"

"My brother, Alice is no more; she was summoned away a few months after their union."

"Dead! and what, what is become of Albert? How one is deceived! I took that gay-looking lad with his hat all covered with ribbons and roses for poor Albert."

"And why not, dear brother? Sure it is Albert, and the pretty fair girl his partner will soon become his partner for life—they are affianced."

He turned with shuddering disgust from the scene, to regard at length that object, who was in fact nearest and dearest of aught living to his heart, but whose glance he had hitherto shunned meeting.

"Louisa, how you are grown! you

are much taller, and you are very, very beautiful!' Heaven keep you happy!"

Barbara now joined them: a table was spread with refreshments, and the young lady of Marchfeldt, whose spirits were strained to their utmost pitch, busily occupied herself in attending the poor, weary, melancholy Wilhelm.

"I have been to the wars, Louisa, and you ask no news of my adventures. There!" said he, unbuckling the belt of his sabre and casting it from him, "I have done with you! You need not examine me, my sister,—for scars I have escaped; but the wound which went forth with me is open yet: never mind, it will close soon!—My only sister, do not heed me; I am sick and wayward, I want nothing but repose—we will talk in the morning; but mark me, Louisa, if my perversities keep you waking, if those pretty eyes are made hollow with watching, I will away again."

She made no answer, but took his arm

and led him to his chamber. After a thousand heartfelt anxious good nights, she retired to the garden parlour, and sent for Conrade.

" Ah, my lady," said the youth, who was Wilhelm's foster brother, " we have seen fine hacking and hewing since we turned our backs on these old towers, and for that matter they are at it yet; but my master heeds nothing but his own ways. He never fought with the rest, but just when he was in the mind; and the great lords and captains let him have his fancy: they knew when he did not mingle in the battle, it was not cowardice that kept him out of it."

" But, Conrade, he is very ill; his poor thin fingers, when we parted for the night, were burning, and he is so wan. Has he been constantly thus?"

" Alas! yes, my lady: I have never seen him take delight in any thing; but he does not complain, and goes his own way. However, I do wish, my lady, you

could have seen him at the battle of Dessau. He rode his fine Persian black, Mirza, and as we galloped towards a position Prince Schaumberg had ordered us to occupy, we saw a poor woman on the ground, where the sabre of some brute had laid her dead and bleeding: a living baby clung to her breast; my master was off Mirza's back in a twinkling, and, what do you think, my lady? If he did not sit down on the ground and take the little foolish bit of a thing, that was smiling and crowing at its dead mother, and wrap it in his cloak and fondle it as if he had nothing better to do, I am a Turk! As for me, I was fit to go mad, and Mirza neighed and snorted enough to deafen one, and pranced and plunged that I thought he would have broken either my arm or his bridle; and no wonder, for I verily think no nobleman or colonel of division ever thought of doing such a thing before, and every body dashing on pell mell to the

charge! Well, presently up came Captain Zollendorff with the rear of the division. 'Why, what in the devil's name are you doing, Baron Marchfeldt? Is this a time to sit nursing a baby? Come, come, throw it away! Mount your horse, and gallop on to the front.' 'Ay, do, bless you, master,' said I; 'what will they say of us?' 'Zollendorff,' said my master, 'take the command for twenty minutes. By Heaven! I will put this innocent life in safety, cost what it may.' Zollendorff shrugged up his shoulders, and gave such a look—but there was no time to lose,—so off he rode; and as for my master why it would be about as easy a job to turn about the cathedral at Vienna as alter him when he is once determined. Now, pray don't be angry, my lady! but it was so provoking, I did really feel as if I could have killed him, and I did mutter some very ugly words to myself. Well, he rolled the atom carefully up, sprang upon Mirza, and bid-

ding me follow, rode as hard as he could three miles back to quarters. I have not seen him smile such a smile since my lady Blanche died, as he did when he had lodged this mighty prize safe in the hands of one of our men's wives. You know Kenred, my lady—it was his wife, and he tossed a great purse of gold to her. He saw what he never saw in his life before,—he saw me looking as sulky as a bear at him; so he said, 'Take heart; Conrade, we shall be time enough yet;' and, thanks to our steeds, so we were, as it happened, but that black-browed Zollendorff had been cracking his jokes, for as my lord rode to the head of his division, I saw shrugs, and winks, and grins, enough to have made his reverence Father Felix swear at the impudent monkeys."

"Oh, my brother!" exclaimed Louisa, "what a heart is thine! Why, Conrade, I doubt the wars have hardened you! I think it is not so very long since, you

could not have left a little helpless orphan baby to be rode over by a set of merciless troopers."

"As for that, my lady, it is all mighty fine talking; but, saving your presence, how should a woman know any thing of the matter? I was thinking all the time how my master's honour and mine were to come off; but after all, I believe Heaven stood his friend, for before the day was decided, we had the good luck to save Prince Schaumberg's life, by rescuing him from the hands of as ugly a set of mustachioed Spanish thieves as ever you looked upon—some of Mansfeldt's men; and the Duke of Friedland said he should love my master for that act as long as he lived. In truth, I cannot tell how it happened, but sad and mild as he was, there was not a man more respected in the army than my lord. Many of the commanders were bullying, swaggering hectors, but not a mother's son of them durst curl his

whiskers in my lord's face, though they might and he never have seen them; but then our generalissimo and his brave son, and Prince Schaumberg and one or two more, would no more have suffered a wink or a grin at him, when he was in his abstracted fits, than Father Felix would let me blow out the taper which burns before the blessed Virgin."

"I do not marvel indeed, Conrade, that he was so beloved," said Louisa, her eyes swimming in tears. "Who can know and not love him?"

"Why, that is true; and yet there was one young gentleman at head-quarters, between whom and my lord there was no love lost. He was as odd in his way as my master; but I question if his fault lay in over-kindness to any thing: he had a mighty scowling, pugnacious look with him."

"Well, good night, Conrade! You have had a fatiguing journey, and it is hard to keep you from repose."

CHAPTER II.

"Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a
suit of sables!
What! two months dead, and not forgotten yet!"
Hamlet.

Louisa of Marchfeldt was early at her orisons in the domestic chapel, offering up her thanks and praises for the safe return of her brother to the castle of his ancestors, and fervent petitions for the cure of that cruel melancholy which had fallen like a blight upon his youth. She received the usual matin benediction of her venerable preceptor and confessor, Father Felix; and together they proceeded to the vestibule of the castle, where the young soldier soon joined them; he bent his knee in pious submission to his spiritual father, from whose lips, from the earliest dawn of reason, he had imbibed the best and

purest notions of religion and morality. Unhappily; the good father never foresaw that religious fortitude would be the first Christian virtue his pupil would have occasion to practise; and he now perceived with regret that, abounding in all the charities which soften and humanise man, kind, gentle, benevolent, pious, almost angelic in his dispositions, strength of mind was denied, and the first heavy trial threatened to be fatal. The late Baron and Baroness had been summoned hence in the infancy of their children. From the period of their deaths, Wilhelm and his sister were consigned to the guardianship, as to temporal matters, of their maternal uncle, who had faithfully and kindly fulfilled his important trust, till it expired on the majority of the young Lord of Marchfeldt; and in spiritual ones, to the excellent and pure-minded friar Felix, who still resided in the castle; beheld by those whom he cherished as his children with filial love

and reverence; respected, consulted, and even obeyed, whenever he found it expedient to dictate, by all its inhabitants.

When Felix saw his *elève* go forth to the wars, he looked confidently forward to the effect which he expected the novelty, glitter, and business of the scene, the desire of glory, so ready to blaze in a young and noble heart, would produce in eradicating the profound sadness into which a sudden, eternal separation from an idolized, affianced bride had plunged him. A year had elapsed since the death of Lady Blanche, when, as if awakening from an overwhelming stupor, the young baron announced his intention of adding the banners of the house of Marchfeldt to those which already followed the standard of the brave and adventurous Vallenstein, Duke of Friedland. The late baron was passionately addicted to arms, and Felix, therefore, naturally hoped much from what he deemed an hereditary impulse; he re-

lied, too, on that wonder-worker, Time, nor harboured a single doubt but Wilhelm would return, not only with a healed spirit but gay, elate, and proud of distinctions, earned amongst the nobles and warriors of his country. But alas! the heart knoweth its own bitterness. Who shall calculate or limit the sorrow of another? Grievous then was the disappointment conveyed to him that morning, in a communication with Lady Louisa; grievous were his self-upbraidings, as he attributed to some defect of firmness or discipline in his plan of education, a malady of mind which menaced the most sinister conclusion. It was discovered that, instead of seeking the repose of which it was evident he stood much in need, Lord Wilhelm had spent many hours of the night in the chapel, watching the cold marble which contained the remains of the late lovely and beloved Blanche of Fribourgh: there he had been scattering flowers, and there

he had been weeping with unabated agony, though three years had now rolled away since the day that witnessed her interment.

"The holy Virgin lend him strength and comfort!" ejaculated the good Felix, "and enlighten our minds how to deal with him for the best."

Relying on the long experienced docility of his pupil, he resolved to assume an air of more than wonted austerity, and to make trial of that influence which, in all other matters, he had never known to fail; he raised and tenderly embraced this darling son of his adoption, and said, in a measured tone, from which he endeavoured to banish all touch of emotion, "You are welcome back, Wilhelm Lord Marchfeldt, to the domain of your fathers! Welcome back from the fields of your renown, where you have been adding new glory to a name long ennobled by the heroic deeds of those who have borne it! We rejoice in your laurels, my son; even

I, a man of peace, cannot deny myself a share in the exultation of your family: your campaign has been fruitful of honour, and your return is most seasonable, for, albeit we have not neglected your interests in your absence, the countenance of a good master is like sunshine on a country, and there is no stimulus like his personal encouragement. Besides, it is time the Lady Louisa should break the silence and seclusion in which it has been her pleasure to live, till she could enter the society she is fitted to adorn, supported and sanctioned by her brother."

"Yes," said Wilhelm, evasively, but with a look of affectionate pride shining through his sadness; "Louisa is indeed fitted to adorn society."

"Ay," rejoined Felix, "you, my son, allude to those attractions which are superficial, accidental, and fugitive. I look through them, at that which is the pride of the beautiful casket, a pure and elevated

mind. I shall see her go forth with confidence, for I know that, tender and delicate as she is, she is likewise strong."

Felix seldom or never, intentionally, used phrases of double import; he spoke to, not at people—but something in the close of his commendation of Louisa went to the heart of Wilhelm, whose pale cheek flushed at what smote him as an indirect reproof, but it was conscience that brought home the arrow. Felix now endeavoured to engage the young soldier in some detail of his adventures, and win him "to fight his battles o'er again;" he made him minutely describe the person and habits of that singular man, Vallenstein; in short, he touched every chord, but found all out of tune; for short and abstracted were poor Wilhelm's answers; his eyes had not profited by the last night's occupation, they were still more hollow and heavy, and his cheeks paler yet, than on the preceding evening; Louisa hardly dared to look at him as

she ministered to him at breakfast, and Father Felix groaned inwardly. At length the good man, in pursuance of the plan he had arranged in his own mind, looking steadily at Wilhelm, who had laid aside his military garb and assumed one of deep mourning, said in an accent of grave inquiry:

"My son, for whom do you wear that sable vesture? I have not heard that any of your noble family have quitted this sublunary world for a better, since we parted, but your dress bespeaks some recent loss."

Now he struck the master chord to which the whole frame vibrated; a deep pause ensued, and Felix was about to repeat the question, when Wilhelm in a hurried voice cried,

"Stay, Sir! stay, my father! spare me a very little while! every thing has its crisis, and mine is coming—it is at hand! It is owing to this conviction that you now see me within the walls of March-

feldt. I have much to do in a space of time, perhaps, very limited. I know the urgency of what remains to be done; let me but take breath, and we will proceed to business."

He started from his seat and approached the friar; he took his hand and pressed it. "I conjure you, my father," said he, "by the love you have ever borne me, to wait a day, perhaps only an hour, till I may collect what strength I have, and I will open my heart to you. You are not more desirous to hear my confession than I to make it; only do not begin the subject. You shall not wait long; I would not wilfully procrastinate."

The agitation of poor Louisa was excessive as she listened to this ambiguous speech of her brother, and observed the deadly hue which overspread his countenance and the universal trembling of his frame. He on the other hand seemed relieved that the ice was thus broken, and with forced animation, abruptly inquired

concerning the improvements of his castle and lands, and affected an interest in various grants, purchases, &c. that it had been found expedient to transact during his campaign.

"We must look a little into these matters," said he; "we'll sally forth presently, and old Philibert the bailiff shall go with us; we will reconnoitre the village at least, but I believe," said he, faintly smiling, "a short walk must content me to-day."

To the village they bent their course, and as Philibert accompanied them, the conversation turned on mere matters of business, but Felix had occasion to remark the good judgment as well as benevolence of heart that was conspicuous in all the young Baron's directions. As they walked they encountered Albert Feltheim, whose gay appearance in the village revels has been mentioned; the young peasant approached respectfully and offered his humble and hearty wel-

come, after congratulating his lord that he had come safe from the wars.

"Why, to be sure," added he, "it might have been just on purpose, as I said to Una, Harold the miller's daughter, my lord, you know Una!" twisting his hat upon his thumb, and looking like a simpleton. "Why, we had got my lady's consent to be sure, but it will be more complete like, now that your lordship's come home, to give yours too."

"If you have the consent of your own heart, Albert, the rest is of little consequence," replied the Baron in a chilling accent.

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed the clown, ready to cry, "I know well enough what your lordship's thinking of, you are thinking about Alice! And for that matter I am willing to think of her too, if it would do any good; but I got so lonesome with thinking and thinking. And forsooth, my lord, if your lordship would not be angry; and you used to let a body speak his mind

before you went soldiering, Albert Feltheim, simple as he is, could give your lordship a bit of advice that would put a little honest colour into that pale face of yours." Indignation did immediately colour it; he touched his hat and walked haughtily on, leaving Albert staring after him in dismay; but had not proceeded half a furlong when he stopped.

"My father," said he, "will you be my almoner—will you give this purse to Albert? Tell him I am not angry, and tell him that with all my heart I wish him happiness. I will wait for you, and we will turn homewards."

Well pleased, the benevolent friar performed his mission, and dismissing Philibert, they bent their steps along the banks of the river towards the castle; it was now that Felix, with inexpressible sorrow, beheld the feebleness of his young companion, who leaned upon his arm in evident need of his support. Half way between the castle and village stood a

small fishing-hut: "Let us rest here, my father, for I will lose no more time; I must speak with you, and I will do it now."

"Not now, my son! not now!" said Felix gently, "there is no need of hurry, and you seem ill and weary: your body wants my advice, methinks, as much as your mind; but I know certain herbs from which I can make an extract of sovereign virtue; you shall take my medicine for a little while, and then we will talk."

"No, father! we must talk now! you are not wont to be lavish of time, and I have little to spare."

It is difficult to ascertain whether the perturbation with which the auditor or speaker prepared for this conference was greater; they entered the hut, and the friar, at Baron Marchfeldt's request, seated himself in silence, while the latter folded his arms and leaned against the wall.

"Sir," said he, at length, in a hollow

concentrated voice, "I would begin by deprecating your just reproaches: I have grievously repaid your exemplary and parental care. You have watched and toiled for an ungrateful wretch, one who is about to disappoint all your hopes and frustrate all your assiduities. I am dying, my father! Nay, hear me, I pray you, hear me patiently, now that I am able to speak to you, and answer me truly to what I shall ask, as you hope in Heaven! Look upon this frail, feverish, emaciated frame; it will soon be cold and tenantless, it will soon perish—its own destroyer."

"Now the holy saints in heaven forbid!" cried the horror-struck friar in his literal apprehension of his pupil's words.

"Yes, I have destroyed myself! not indeed by any positive act, but by connivance with my destroyer. No mother ever hugged her new-born baby to her breast with fonder care, than I the sorrow which has consumed me. I have fed it gradually, fed it with my vital blood, till

all is wasted. When *she* died, my spirit turned cold within me; it seemed as if the tie which united me with her, was twisted and intangled with the thread of my being. I loved to believe it so, and to feel myself, as it were, palpably pulled towards the sepulchre of Blanche. In short, father, I doubt I might have lived if I had struggled. Tell me, tell me, on your soul, does a second death await me, because the first has been voluntary?"

"My son! my son!" said the good Felix, "you rive my heart. But you are not dying!" eagerly examining his countenance; "you are, it is true, somewhat weak—and,—and your habit has in it rather more of the hectic than one could wish—and your pulse," said he, feeling his hand; "no doubt, I have felt a better pulse; and it has an ugly flutter with it,—but there's no danger, my son!" and, while he thus wilfully deluded himself and his pupil, the tears rolled down his venerable cheeks.

"My father, were it not necessary I would not afflict you—but my hours are numbered. Death stole so gently on me, that I perceived not his approach 'till some marks of feebleness were observed by my fellow-soldiers. Young Vallenstein insisted on my permitting the visit of his father's physician, the skilful and celebrated Müller; he gave me no prescription; he advised only that I should lose no time in seeking my home; but his mode of treating me at once opened my eyes, and I peremptorily demanded his opinion—he gave it reluctantly, but decisively."

"Müller! and did Müller despair of you?" said Felix with a groan.

"The moment my destiny was announced, the consciousness of crime struck upon my heart; but I resolved to employ the remnant of time in fulfilling such duties as were still in my power, to Louisa, to you, to my vassals. Since my return, I have hardly dared to look

upon my sister. I was born her protector, and I am basely, cowardly deserting my post. Oh! my father! my venerable friend! is there forgiveness for me in heaven, or have I separated myself eternally from her, whose loss on earth I have rebelliously deplored?"

"Alas! you are not guiltless, my son! My tenderness shall not induce me to betray my trust. You have sinned, but there is mercy in heaven! Would that I had no share in your offence! But I am conscious your mind needed a wiser and firmer director, one who would have braced, not softened it."

The self-accusations of Father Felix were far from groundless, though such reference to time, now no longer retrievable, could avail nothing. With a heavy and deeply afflicted heart, he consented to break to the Lady Louisa the approach of that calamity, which was not only inevitable, but apparently nigh at hand; for the moment Wilhelm had re-

peated to him the sentence of the sage Müller, the feeble hold to which he clung gave way within his grasp, and he was compelled to admit that the case was indeed hopeless.

"It should seem, my father," said the Baron, as slowly they pursued the path to the castle, "that I have lifted a burthen from my own bosom to lay it upon yours. I have not felt so light, I dare not say happy, since the day *she* left us. Reconcile Louisa—she has a strong mind—she is a noble-hearted girl, and will spare me the misery of seeing her suffer."

Friar Felix found some consolation in observing that his companion was almost a different being from the one who entered the hut with him; his cheek had now some tinge of life, his eye was less heavy, and his step more alert. The good father would willingly have delayed the performance of his cruel task; but Wilhelm, internally convinced how precious were the

ebbing moments, urged and entreated; he retired to seek repose in his own apartment, while Felix went to request an audience of Lady Louisa in her oriel chamber. It were useless to dwell on the shock conveyed to the heart of this affectionate sister by these sad tidings. Who has not suffered from like causes according to their individual capacity for suffering? It may be imagined, therefore, what she felt, whose feelings were of the finest temper, attached to Wilhelm, not only as her sole, her darling brother—her dearest friend and natural protector; but as the head, the prop and pride of an ancient and noble house: yet, in the midst of the most acute sense of the dire calamity that awaited her, she opposed and subdued the overwhelming sensations which crowded upon her, and ere the good friar could repeat the entreaties of her brother, she said, "This stroke is indeed hard to bear! But I will die rather than any word or

look of mine shall torture my dying Wilhelm! From this moment, father, let us unite our forces! I call on you to aid my resolution!"

The old man was but ill able to answer the call; he had been the spiritual director of the Marchfeldt family for many years, and its vicissitudes were the only vicissitudes he had known.

"Bless thee! bless thee, my daughter!" cried he, "I will ask of Heaven to strengthen my nature; and in the mean time I will endeavour to imitate where I ought to have virtue to lead; but alas! I am aged and feeble-hearted."

CHAPTER III.

"And pining love shall waste their youth."

Baron Marchfeldt and his sister met at table with mutual trepidation, but it was only visible in the former; they stole a look at each other, and their glances met. Louisa's countenance expressed pity, affection, forbearance. Wilhelm's mute inquiry was answered; he understood his sister, and was assured, at least, that he was safe from upbraidings, either direct or implied; nay, almost was he willing to hope that the shock she had sustained had been less severe in its consequences than he had anticipated. Father Felix blessed the meal with a faltering voice; but even he felt revived on perceiving how successfully the Lady Louisa had banished all traces of her

recent agitation. Wilhelm affected to be gay, and, filling his goblet, said—

" Come, father, you shall pledge me to the happy progress of the Duke of Friedland's arms; may he soon make our emperor master of his own dominions!"

" When you, my son, formed part of Vallensteïn's army, my fervent prayers followed him; but now"—

" And now—are not Zollendorf and five hundred brave Marchfeldters worth even a wish? Nay, father, you must pledge me. Besides, while I served under the banners of Vallensteïn, he was a father to me; and his son, the brave, generous, noble-souled Casimir, he was my brother in arms. Oh! would he were indeed my brother! Louisa, have you no curiosity to learn my camp adventures? Do you think I have nothing to relate worth asking for? Battles and sieges may not suit a maiden's taste, but a camp furnishes sometimes singular specimens of that marvellous animal, man;

at least, I found such without any diligence in seeking."

"Well, Wilhelm, you shall relate your tale in the ear of no drowsy listener. I will take my embroidery, and we will go sun ourselves on the western rampart."

The young baron was unspeakably relieved by the explanation of the morning; and the contrast of his feelings, to those with which he had the preceding evening entered the castle, produced a lightness of spirits which had long been unknown to him; while Louisa, without being deceived into false hopes, rejoiced in the transient animation. Father Felix declined making one in the party on the ramparts, his thoughts being deeply absorbed in compounding an infallible nostrum for a wasted constitution; and he was bound to a neighbouring heath in pursuit of certain simples, in whose efficacy his confidence was almost unlimited. Having ascended to the battlements,

Louisa seated herself at her embroidery, and Wilhelm, stretching himself at his ease in the sunshine, thus began:—

"You know, Louisa, my resolution to join the army was somewhat sudden. It was an effort, I can tell you; but I felt I was doing nothing, of no earthly use, wasting in obscurity, the grief and despair of those whose pride I might have been. Well, my sister, this thought goaded me occasionally; it struck me too, that I should do better amongst strangers, and the rougher and more careless I should find my new associates, the more suitable would they be to my purpose. To say truth, my sister, and let it not seem ungrateful, your tender watchfulness, delicate as it was—the mild and cautious remonstrances of the good Felix—tortured me like the perpetual wearing of a galling fetter; and I thought with eagerness of changing such society for that of rude and reckless men, from whom I had no sympathy to dread.

I quitted my castle, as some captive wretch issues from his dungeon, in all the consciousness of newly recovered freedom;—but alas! I too soon discovered that my gaoler and I were inseparable. I could not fly from myself; only one hand could unlock my prison! —But this is not to the purpose. I found the duke at Halberstadt, in the full career of conquest: my small reinforcement was unexpected, and therefore doubly welcome; and nothing could be more gracious than my reception. The general was seated amongst his military dependants, with all the pomp and magnificence of a sovereign;—indeed, many reigning princes stood around, listening in submission to his imperative mandates. Wrapt within myself, incapable of loss and indifferent to gain, I beheld the glittering imposing scene as a cold observer, with whom it could have no relative interest.

"'Baron Marchfeldt,' said the duke,

'We are scarcely strangers—we shall soon be friends. The name of your noble father, Baron Ulric, is dear to chivalry; one of more esteemed prowess never graced the annals of war. I saw him once; he was of a fine, martial, majestic figure, such a man as we rarely look upon in our days. For your father's memory, welcome, Lord of Marchfeldt. You shall teach us to prize you for your own sake; you stole on us unexpectedly, or we would have reserved you suitable quarters. For your lieutenants we will endeavour to provide; and I, while we remain at Halberstadt, will divide my apartments with you.' I bowed my acknowledgments, and was retiring—'Stay, baron, I must present you to your comrades. My son, Count Casimir of Vallenstein, Prince Schaumberg,' the Chevalier Warbeck of Wolfstein,—but, in short, why should I run over a list of names to which you can annex no character? Those I have mentioned will

suffice. And,' added the duke, 'you will sup with me to-night.'

"I had flattered myself that, this audience over, I might retire and commune unmolested with myself during the rest of the day, and at night take my moon-light walk beyond the camp. Now I felt the chain I had voluntarily forged for myself; but, unaccustomed to pay obedience to man, a novice in military etiquette, I perceived not that the duke, in bidding me to the feast, was issuing a command; and, thanking him respectfully for his courtesy, I briefly declined his invitation, and retired, unconscious of the astonishment my insubordination excited, wondered at, and perhaps even envied, for the proud insensibility with which it seemed that I repaid a reception so unusually auspicious. No second effort was practised to detain me; and, having made a few necessary arrangements with Zollendorf, in whose experience of camps I implicitly confided, I left the

ordering of my Marchfeldters to hi-
cretion, and strolled forth, well pleas
to find myself once more alone. Hal-
berstadt was such a scene of business
and rumour as I had never before beheld,
and I impatiently hastened beyond its
walls;—still it was difficult to procure
the solitude I panted for; even the little
river, which washed the ramparts, was
crowded with boats, bearing the pea-
santry, who dwelt on either bank, with
provision for Vallenstein's army; and
far and wide the country was covered
with tents and swarming with men. I
was speeding straight across the camp,
thinking only of gaining a wood, which
flanked it on the right, beneath whose
shades I promised myself to spend the
remainder of the day, when I arrived
at a post, whose sentinel challenged me.
I was ignorant of the pass-word. 'I am
a stranger,' said I, 'my name is Baron
Marchfeldt: I arrived this morning with

forcement of Hungarians; I have learned the watch-word.'

"'That is a pity,' said the inflexible sentinel; 'for it is the only key which will open this door:'—and he replaced his pipe in his mouth, puffing away, and renewed his limited march backwards and forwards with the coolest unconcern. While I stood silently gnawing the curb, which thus unexpectedly bridled my will, a gentleman came up, whom I recognized as one of those to whom I had been introduced at the levee of the general.

"'Hark ye, sir!' said he to the soldier, 'let Baron Marchfeldt pass; I am his warrant. But take the word with you, sir! you will arrive at many posts as stubbornly guarded as you have found this.'

"I turned, and looked thankfully on my deliverer, whose voice was no less musical than its effect was satisfactory.

He smiled at the warmth with which I expressed myself obliged.

" 'Perhaps, sir,' said he, 'there is not a man in Germany who can better understand the extent of the favour I have conferred. You are bent on exploring yonder forest, I fancy. You do well. Keep yourself out of the herd—preserve your identity—and Warbeck of Wolfsteïn will be proud to acknowledge you, if not for his friend, at least for his fellow.'

" I was surprised that any external object could obtain even a temporary possession of my thoughts; but there was something indescribable about this Wolfsteïn. His figure had nothing striking in it; his complexion was olive, and his features very handsome; his brow, naturally smooth and open, was alternately contracted by thought, or brightened by genius; and a mass of black hair, black as the raven's wing, waved over it. In spite of the regular beauty

f his features, it was impossible to dwell upon his countenance without doubting, strongly doubting, the complexion of his mind. I can convey to your fancy no idea of this man's smile;—never did approbation, kindness, or pleasure awaken it, but scorn and hatred found an able interpreter for their deepest meaning in the curl of Wolfsteïn's lip. He wore no uniform; yet, as it should seem, he was not without his fopperies, for it was his custom to have his throat uncovered; and when at feasts, his Bohemian hat and cloak were laid aside, his bust bore a striking resemblance to those of the elder Romans. I have given you Wolfsteïn's picture, as much of it, at least, as a painter could give you;—the rest, as far as I know it, must develop itself more gradually.—Would to God," and he smote his forehead with involuntary agitation, "you may never have an opportunity to com-

pare my portrait of him with the original!"

"Why, dear brother, have you cause to fear any fatal mischief towards me in such a rencontre?"

"I could ill explain to myself what I foresee—what I apprehend; but certain it is, that a painful thrill creeps over my nerves whenever I think of Wolfsteïn! I feel a sort of dim perception that he is somehow implicated in the destiny of all that is precious to me—of you, my sister! And where he is implicated, there must be mischief."

"But we may never meet; and should any chance throw him in my way, it would be easy to avoid him."

"It is, at least, easy to talk of doing so now he is distant; and why should we not thus beguile ourselves, since our knowledge of future events, which are out of our control, is but a mere fruitless anticipation of evil? The momentary restraint I had endured, served to make

liberty delightful. I wandered, careless of my way, amid the glades and labyrinths of Falconberg Forest. The murmurs of the camp—the neighing of steeds—the deep beat of the drum—the braying of trumpets—and, occasionally, the loud volley of the signal gun, instead of disturbing, heightened the charm of my leafy solitude. I strayed I knew not, I cared not, whither. The moon arose full, bright, and majestic; and I was unconscious that it signified whether I was occupied in watching her progress as she sailed through the immeasurable fields of æther, or lay restlessly counting the hours on my own couch. As I stood meditating on unseen worlds, and their inhabitants, the breeze bore upon my ear the strokes of the cathedral clock as it tolled midnight, and immediately a heavy roll of drums bespoke a change of guard, or some such evolution. Instinctively I endeavoured to direct my steps homeward: but to extricate myself

from the mazes of the forest was no easy task, and another day had dawned ere I presented myself at an outpost of the camp; where, nothing doubting, I delivered my pass-word.

"'Ah, ha!' cried the sentinel, 'that won't do, my friend; you must try some other trick. What! do ye think we shall take the old pass-word?—No, no. But as you seem a suspicious, lurking sort of person, I'll just trouble you to step into this watch-box, for I should not wonder but my captain might like marvellously to ask you a few civil questions.'

"Contention was vain; the soldier only did his duty, and I turned passively into the sentry-box, and, wrapping myself in my cloak, awaited indifferently the change of guard, which was to be the signal of my deliverance. Here, however, I had not been long confined, when I heard the pass-word given, and an animated parley taking place between some new comer and the sentinel—it

was Conrade's voice; and almost immediately my narrow prison was unfastened. 'Oh, my lord,' cried Conrade the moment he beheld me, 'I have been wild with fright—I have been inquiring at the quarters of every nobleman and captain in and out of the walls. Captain Zollendorf is as phlegmatic as an old dry crust; he would not let a man stir to seek you. He said, as you were gone on one of your star-gazing expeditions, there was more need he should stick to his duty; and threatened to put me under arrest for raving at him. What an ugly old devil it is, with his black fierce whiskers curling over his smoky parchment face! But, sir, I don't think in my conscience that the general is over and above pleased at your taking this opportunity for a little walk. I just came in his way when I was asking every body if they had seen you, and so I asked *him*. It was past midnight, and he was going to his lodgings. 'What!'

said he, 'is he not in his apartments? This is a strange beginning!—This will never do!—Your master and I must have some conversation.'

"'Lord love you, sir,' said I; 'you had better let him alone. There's no more harm in him than in a sucking babe:—but as for having his own way, if *you* find out how to prevent it, it's more than I expect.—I have left off trying long ago.'

"'Ay!' Is your master so wilful? If that be the case, he had better not have placed himself under my command; for *I* have *my* way too: and my way is to be implicitly and invariably obeyed.' I did not like his looks over and above, so in as humble a voice as I could—

"'If your honour,' said I, 'would take a bit of advice from a foolish fellow, only just make believe, as it were, to give him his way, and you'll manage him all the while easy enough, and he never be none the wiser. I have tried it my-

self, I assure your honour.' It was a good thought of mine; but let me alone for getting out of a scrape. He turned pleasant in a moment, and began to laugh. 'There,' said he, giving me a dollar, 'you are a good fellow; go and seek your master diligently.—But,' said he, turning about, 'is the second in command at his post?—Are all the Marchfeldters, except their leader, properly disposed of?'

"'I thought it was the nick of time to be even with old Zollendorf, and told him how gruff and sulky he had been.'

"'Yes,' he said, 'Zollendorf has seen service; your master is happy in being so seconded;' and this was all I got for my pains. Well, the next person I met in my search was the young Count Casimir: I thought he might know something of you; but when I told him you could not be found, he started, and said, —'How unlucky! I would I could assist

your search, but I have an appointed office for the night, and my orders are precise. Be cautious, however, to whom you speak. I have a strong reason for wishing my father may not be informed of Baron Marchfeldt's absence. To-morrow I will have the honour to give your master, who is apparently a novice in camps, some hints respecting our manner of living.' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'the general does know my master is missing; but I told him there was no use in finding fault with those wandering ways; so I don't think he'll be angry.' 'I am afraid you are a blockhead, sir,' was his civil reply. 'I would not for fifty dollars you had said a word to my father about your master; you have perhaps done him an injury I may find it no easy matter to counteract.'

"'Sir,' said I, 'it's no use talking such impossible talk as that!—the best friend my master has in the world is

Conrade Munster, except you reckon old Friar Felix; and, God help him, he is a good old man, but his best days are passed.'

"'Well, friend, I have no time to talk; I must to my duty. Find your master, if possible;—tell him he must not fail the general's levee at ten to-morrow; and if he will be in the great aisle of the cathedral at half past nine, I will endeavour to meet him there; but if I do not arrive, in the mean time, let him be assured that necessity, not neglect, occasions my absence. At all events, let him not fail the levee!'

"Well, there was an end of him!—But as I crossed the camp, almost crying with vexation, I met a handsome gentleman wrapt in his fur mantle.

"'Good even, friend; you are one of Baron Marchfeldt's men, I think?'

"I would not tell him you were missing, that I was determined; but he was

even with me.—' What time did your master return?'

"'Return, sir!' said I.—' Where should he return from?'

"'I met him going to the forest, about four yesterday afternoon.'

"'To the forest, did you?' said I. 'What a fool I was never to guess it.—Ay, ay; he is at his old tricks, sure enough! If I had not been an ass I might have known where he was, and found him without any fuss, or saying a word to a living soul.'

"'To whom have you named it?—Does the duke know?'

"'Ay,' said I, 'he does know;—but what of that?—I can't stand chattering here.'

"'Good!' said he; and I thought he meant something; but he walked off, and here I am.

"The sentinel now treated me with the respect due to my rank, and apologized

that his orders were so positive he might not release me without his captain's sanction; but an explanation soon took place, and I found my way to the quarters I had so truant-like abandoned.

CHAPTER IV.

"I do note that grief and patience rooted in him, both
"Mingle their spurs together."

CYMBELINE.

"FROM Conrade's story it was easy to gather that I had sinned against the rules of the profession I had adopted; that I had already incurred the censure of one, into whose hands I had surrendered the power and the right, not only of reproof, but coercion. I mused somewhat disturbedly on this fact. My apathy would have counselled me to take no care about it, and to let things work themselves out even as they would—to continue my own separate path—and to forget the existence of aught but myself. Some secret voice, in opposition to this doctrine, told me, that as I had of my own choice assumed the yoke, it would be

absurd, childish, and froward, to begin by breaking it. I am the son of many noble fathers, thought I; the concluding link of a bright chain. An illustrious name has been transmitted to me!—the race of Marchfeldt has been hitherto glorious!—and shall I, just at the goal, falter? Thus reflecting, I dressed for the levee; and, ere I proceeded to keep my appointment at the cathedral, I went to Zollendorff's quarters. The grim countenance of the honest veteran betrayed his inward displeasure through all the duly paid submission our relative stations exacted from him. 'Zollendorff, my friend,' said I, 'I am a young and inexperienced soldier—you must be my tutor in arms. I suspect I have already been guilty of some failure in propriety.'

"'Ay, my lord; I doubt your reception at the levee this morning will be of a different complexion to that of yesterday! General Vallenstein is a strict

commander; he knows how to preserve order and discipline in his camp as well as any leader in Europe.'

" ' Well, Zollendorf; I have this once committed the error of a raw recruit—I will be more observant in future; and to your experience I commit my ignorance.'

" As I turned to speak to one of the lieutenants, I heard him muttering—

" ' I have no hopes of him!—He a Marchfeldt! His father, the noble Ulric, instead of sitting all night in a wood listening to the owls, and staring at the moon, would have been up with the lark, visiting every post round the camp, talking to the soldiers, and minding his business. This lad has been changed at nurse; there is never a drop of Marchfeldt blood in those creamy cheeks!—Whoever lives to see the day, he'll run away the first charge, and shame us all.'

" I verily believe the old man was careless whether I heard him or not, so con-

temptuous was his opinion of my manhood. The conclusion of his speech did gall me; but I betrayed not that it had reached my ear. I felt the spur in my side, and my sluggish spirit stirred within me. 'No,' said I; 'even she, whose loss has thus changed me, she would have blushed to hear her Wilhelm so doubted! Shall I prove myself unworthy to love her living, or lament her dead? No, old Zollendorf, I will oblige you to confess your injustice—you shall learn to recognize the son of Baron Ulric.'

"In truth, the opprobrious words of this rude veteran were friends in disguise. I wanted the stimulus; and the interruption thus given to my constant and unvarying train of thought was essential. I had a sort of instinctive sense of this; besides, as he had been my father's trusty comrade, I resolved, instead of turning to upbraid him on the spot, to wait patiently till I had proof to offer that his thoughts had injured me.

" The hour now approached when I was to meet young Vallensteïn in the aisle of the cathedral; thither then I repaired. He was not there, nor came he; and I disposed of the time, till it was necessary to appear at the levee, in tracing the various records of human caducity scattered throughout the venerable pile.

" As I ascended the stairs which led to the saloon of audience, I was coolly greeted by several officers, who, the day before, had been, on my presentation by their general, somewhat profuse in their civilities. I should not probably have noticed the alteration, but Wolfsteïn, who was lounging against the balustrade, looking with apparent carelessness on the passers by, just lifted his eyes, and said, 'Swallows, sir!—All swallows! Mind *them*, and you may know when the wind blows from the north-east.—Believe me, no weathercock is truer.'

" As he spoke I felt a slight tap on my shoulder: it was Count Casimir, who

ran up the staircase almost breathless with haste.

"'Baron,' said he, 'if my message was faithfully delivered, you excuse my failure; trust me it was unavoidable. But a soldier in these stirring times is no free agent. I was anxious to have held some friendly counsel with you ere you again meet my father—but all will go well. One word, however, you must permit me. Should my father advert to any thing that has passed in terms somewhat more imperative than you are wont to listen to, I beseech you govern your feelings—do not chafe him; and trust me, sir, there is not a brave man in the duke's army who has not occasionally needed such a caution. I pledge *my* honour, sir, that yours shall sustain no tarnish from your patience.'

"'I should think, Vallenstein,' said Wolfstein disdainfully, 'your list of friends must vie in number with your father's muster-roll! You are safe here,

no doubt; but pr'ythee, Casimir, have you always redeemed your honour unshorn of its beams, in pledging it so liberally to your friends of yesterday?'

"'You are aware, at least,' replied young Vallenstein, 'that we are not all swallows. Fie, sir! think better of human nature. We have birds among us of every feather—doves, falcons, eagles! I hope I am not such a craven as to quail at your sarcasm. Baron Marchfeldt, do you accept my pledge?—Will you confide in my counsel?'

"And he offered his hand with a winning frankness it was not in me to resist. In the voice and countenance of Casimir Vallenstein dwelt something which, without giving the judgment time to inquire, seized on my confidence, while the character of Wolfstein's aspect excited the mind to deep and scrutinising investigation. The former took my arm, and together we entered the presence of the Duke of Friedland. I

perceived that my conductor in no way presumed on the close tie which subsisted between him and the general; the same stiff military salute was exchanged—the same formal homage paid by the young count to his father—as marked the approach of the other officers. He presented a small packet of papers; and then, turning to me, whose entrance, I believe, the duke had purposely neglected to notice, said,

"'Baron Marchfeldt, my lord, awaits your commands, and deputes me his apologist for certain omissions into which his inexperience of camps has betrayed him, but which a short campaign, under your banners, will suffice to reform in him.'

"I was touched and surprised by the generous and earnest anxiety which was visible in my young mediator, as he pleaded for me, and the deprecating look with which he awaited his father's reply. I perceived, too, the curiosity,

mingled with other feelings, that marked the countenances of those who stood around us, while I, the temporary subject of so much speculation, was perhaps the most unconcerned individual amongst the swarms of human beings who awaited my sentence from the commander.

" 'I am sorry,' said the duke drily, bowing to me with a freezing air as he spoke, 'that the Baron has so early found occasion to apologize!—Will you do me the favour, sir, to remain till my friends disperse, as it is expedient we should converse a little in private.'

" I bowed my silent submission to his will. I believe the spectators were disappointed of some triumph; they expected to see the tyro humbled and agitated! they little guessed what an invulnerable panoply guarded my bosom from all the artillery with which mortified pride assails her victim. My sole remaining ambition was to do my duty blamelessly, and, as personal fear never

had a part in my composition, I felt a calm assurance that I should not disgrace my fathers.'

" 'It is well over, Baron,' said Count Casimir, his eyes sparkling with benevolent pleasure; 'I can see at a glance that the general regards you auspiciously: I have never known any one come off so lightly. But you behaved like a hero; you happily tempered the acknowledgment of error with the dignity of a man and a soldier. It is the way to my father's esteem—it is the way, too, to foil the machinations of the envious; for, in spite of my dispute with Wolfsteïn, if the truth must be told, we have amongst us, I am afraid, some birds that would gladly see your plumage moult, so they might deck themselves therein. But we are a mingled race—neither for the most part all devil, or all angel, but a little of both—*ainsi va le monde.*'

" Wolfstein now joined as Count Casimir quitted me.

" 'I suspect,' said he, 'this mummery, this representation, this solemn farce, this breathing machinery, does not impose upon you. If nature had not made human creatures so much alike, the world might be tolerable. As it is, *ma foi! c'est un triste sejour!* For ever, and for ever, and for ever, the same unmeaning routine! My breathing time in this dull and misty planet of ours has already extended to the space of twenty-eight years. I have lived with all sorts of men, and been smiled on by women of all complexions! Mark you, Sir! *There* lies the difference—black, brown, or fair, grey eyes or hazel. For their humour, its foundation, its ultimate bearing, is the same; the apparent variety in their dispositions lies in the mode of dressing them—they are all intrinsically alike. For mine own part, I have proceeded hitherto *en maître.* Men always regard with awe the spirit that disdains them! Now *I* would not have

stood before the duke, and endured the bending of his brow, as you allowed yourself to be persuaded into by that *ignis fatuus* of a fellow, his son, for all his blood-stained laurels! Baron Marchfeldt, you must understand that custom has no sway with me. I despise it! I speak to you in my own character! You have, or I mistake, something distinct and original in your composition, something worth preserving in its purity, something which should spurn the control of beings with whom it has nothing in common. Should you prove what I take you for, we will form a league; the word friendship suits me not—too much impure breath has been exhaled in the utterance of it.'

"'I fear, Chevalier!' replied I, 'I shall foil your penetration; my difference from the mass of my fellow-creatures comes not from nature, it is the produce of events. In my conduct this morning, my own temper and reason would have

instigated me to the same behaviour which failed to meet your approbation, if Count Casimir had been out of the question. I will imitate you, chevalier, in speaking my own language, and confess that I am dull in comprehending what profit can arise to either from any league we might form, since there is not a more lifeless machine in the duke's army than him whose identity it pleases you to consider worth preserving.'

"'Well! follow your destiny!' said he, 'since thus it must be! The gross of mankind are made by destiny—a few shape out their own course! However, while there is aught to unriddle about you, I shall observe you, sift, and analyse;—it will do as well as any other pastime.'

"Meanwhile the levee was dispersing, and the duke sent a gentleman to me with a message, requesting my attendance in his cabinet; I approached, when Count Vallenstein said, smiling,

"'For once, Baron Marchfeldt, grant me precedence!' then addressing his father—'My lord, I am somewhat straitened for time; will you indulge me with a private audience, only for five minutes?'

"The duke formally requested my excuse, and preceded his son to his cabinet, while I waited alone in the saloon. The father and son remained some time closeted, when the latter opened the door, and summoned me without retreating himself: I found my general's countenance cleared of its clouds; he took my hand and said, smiling,

"'I am desirous, Baron, you should have an ostensible post allotted you without delay, such a one as suits your pretensions. I appoint you, therefore, colonel of division, in the left wing of my army, which is commanded by Prince Schaumberg; my son's regiment is there: Casimir is a veteran at five and twenty, and will be your military Mentor, if you

will trust him. I shall announce your appointment on parade to-morrow. You will have no sinecure, I promise you, for I have supplied you *de quoi penser, de quoi faire*. You will find your captain, old Zollendorff, a treasure; an active and efficient right hand. You have your spurs yet to win, and the honour of many noble fathers to support; and although your first attempt at military etiquette has been somewhat eccentric, I feel an intimate persuasion that your first field will not diminish the laurels of the house of Marchfeldt.'

"'My Lord,' said I, 'the generous manner in which you have overlooked the irregularity of my conduct yesterday shall never be forgotten, and I will endeavour to prove to you that I feel it.'

"The count looked on me with a smile of such benignity, as one who had seen him only in public, as a despotic military chief, could not have believed had ever adorned his countenance.

" 'Now,' said Casimir, as we quitted the cabinet, 'I have, in fact, nothing to do for the next hour; so as I am to make a soldier of you, suppose you let me examine how you are appointed and accoutred for the post allotted you. In the first place, let us visit your stables; those, I mean, belonging to your staff. I dare swear old Zollendorff has taken care to mount your regiment well.'

" Imagine, Louisa, how completely I was now compelled to change my habits; but I could only resign myself to that which an act of my own had rendered inevitable, and to that which I was conscious the honour of my house required at my hands. Casimir's admiration of my stud was extreme.

" 'It is superb,' he cried: 'there is not a field officer in the army, except my father, better appointed.'

" In short, all my military furniture was pronounced well chosen, and an hour was quickly consumed in the examination.

" 'Now,' said he, 'I must be off!—but, Baron, you will dine with me to-day. You meet the General, Prince Schaumberg, and several of our great men. Two is the hour, and remember we are punctual as clock-work. For Heaven's sake,' added he, laughing, 'keep out of the enchanted wood. But in truth I am serious—punctuality is a law with us, and we must not be waited for, even at feasts. You are new amongst us, and have opinion to purchase. A little while hence and I shall see you a privileged man.'

" 'Stay, Count,' said I, 'if your business is not of a private nature, take me with you, that I may steal experience from you. It will, at least, secure me from the danger of losing myself.'

" Louisa, it was an effort of resolution, and cost me dear, thus to relinquish my beloved solitude, but an effort which I found must be made; and I patiently

followed young Vallensteïn through a long, dull routine of military directions. The dinner hour approached, and I accompanied him to his apartments.

" 'I am impatient,' he said, 'for the assembling of my guests, though my feelings towards some of them are not of the most hospitable nature. Some of Wolfsteïn's swallows peck at my table to-day. They are hugging themselves in the thought that you are under arrest at this moment, for so they interpreted the frown on the general's brow. I suspect their pity for your supposed disgrace will be almost equalled by their satisfaction, on beholding you promoted to a post, which many of them vainly covet. There is something so base and despicable in envy, that from my inmost soul I rejoice in its defeat."

" 'I arrived,' said I, 'yesterday at Halberstadt a perfect stranger. How is it possible, that, in so short a space of time, I can be the object of so many

passions, good and evil, in the bosoms of my future associates?—But since thus it is, I will content myself with adding no fuel, by my own act at least, to the malignity of envy; and ample consolation is accorded me, in the humane and benignant feelings which exist towards me in the noble mind of Count Vallenstein.'

"'Call it, if you please, friendship, Baron,' replied Casimir, his cheek glowing with benevolent kindness. 'Do not judge me by the insinuations of the misanthrope Wolfsteïn. I differ from *him*, it is true, not only in that I feel good will towards every living soul (except the swallows), but that I do love a few, a very few, in my heart's core, while there lives not the being for whom Wolfsteïn owns kindred or affection. My father,' added he, with a smile of enthusiasm—'That is a noble creature!—a majestic, dignified, powerful, generous man! As yet you know him only in the austerity of his high official character; you shall

see him anon the social convivial soldier. Prince Schaumberg, our immediate commander, is a polished gentleman, and a brave and skilful officer. Wolfsteïn, by my faith, I know not how to describe *him*—he is beyond me. I can neither fathom his temper nor account for his privileges—But we are interrupted, and it is well; for I am interested that you should form your own judgment of this inexplicable man before I tell you all I know of him.

"The Duke of Friedland now entered, attended by a numerous train of officers, Austrian, Hungarian, Bohemian, &c. He himself distinguished, even in externals, as one fitted to be the leader of men—tall, athletic, majestic; his countenance bright, piercing, and intelligent; his eye quick and penetrating; his voice deep and sonorous; his whole appearance breathing authority and demanding respect. He gaily returned my salute. 'You have found a docile pupil, it seems,

my son,' said he, looking affectionately on Casimir. 'And you, Baron, have found a friend worth cultivating. Schaumberg, I must present you with your new officer, Baron Marchfeldt. He has brought us a troop of fine young fellows from the banks of the Raab.'

" Prince Schaumberg bowed, shook hands with me, and said something polite on the subject of my being attached to his wing; but there was something embarrassed in his manner of paying the compliment, which struck me; and I wondered if it was possible this nobleman might be the patron of some of the pretenders to the post conferred on me, of which Casimir had spoken. In seating ourselves at table, the etiquette of precedency was closely observed. I was placing myself at the lower end, which the duke noticed to his son, who immediately cried,

" ' Baron Marchfeldt, do me the fa-

vour to take your seat next Prince Schaumberg.'

"As I complied, I could not but perceive that surprise, strengthened and seconded by some other feeling, was very manifest in the countenances of several of the captains. I was treated, during the feast, with marked distinction by the duke and his son. Prince Schaumberg, too, exerted himself to draw me into conversation. From him I learned, that we might any day expect the approach of the rebels, and that the troops were held in constant preparation; consequently, that the most rigid discipline was maintained in the city and camp. I confessed my own total ignorance of military duty.

"'But,' said I, 'I have resigned myself to the guidance of the young Count Vallenstein.'

"'You do well,' replied the Prince: 'he is a very noble fellow, and he has given

you a valuable pledge of his faith—he has bid high for your confidence.'

"I did not understand him, but imagined he alluded to Casimir having answered for my future conduct to his father. It was, however, soon obvious that some farther meaning was couched in the Prince's expression, and I requested his explanation.

"'Is it possible, then,' cried he, 'you are not aware that the post to which you are promoted has been long promised to Count Vallenstein,—that he, this morning, volunteered its transfer to you, nay, obstinately insisted on its relinquishment; in consequence of which your warrant of appointment is preparing, and will be presented to you on parade to-morrow? I'll tell you what, young man,—your poets and moralists *talk* of these sort of things very liberally, but *this* is a disinterested *action*, and worthy of as noble a young fellow as ever buckled on a sabre.'

" My heart was oppressed almost to suffocation.

" 'And has Vallensteïn done this for a mere stranger?' exclaimed I.

" 'Ay,' said the veteran, " your wonder is natural. It must be confessed that Casimir is romantic—his father had once a touch of it; but he knows more of mankind; his head has had many a tough struggle with his heart, and has won the battle, as is meet it should.'

" Conversation now became general, and I sank into that silence which it was irksome to me to break. The new and beautiful page I had turned over in the history of human nature, somewhat softened the intenseness of thought in which I was habitually buried. I forgot the actual scene, and knew not that I was seated at a military feast, surrounded by many observers. Fancy carried me back to the banks of the Raab; and do you know, Louisa, she beguiled me into a happy, happy vision. I con-

ceived myself presenting Casimir to my sister, joining their hands, and breathing blessings on their heads. How long I might have remained thus absorbed I know not, for the multitude of voices rather lulled than disturbed my reverie. But Count Blumenberg, who sate opposite to me, called on me to pledge him in a bumper. The sound of my own name startled me. The Count happily was engaged in filling his own goblet, and not in the scrutiny of my countenance; but Wolfsteïn, who was next him, sate with his elbow on the table, his lynx eye fastened on me, and devouring, as it were, my very thoughts; nor was my embarrassment the less, from the consciousness that the tears had involuntarily gathered in my eyes. I dispersed them hastily, and poured a little wine into my glass—

" 'Nay, nay, Baron!' cried Blumenberg, 'we make no compromise—my challenge was a bumper.'

" 'Pardon me,' said Vallenstein, 'Baron Marchfeldt must be excused—we must give him time for seasoning. I take up the pledge for him, and will match your goblet, though it be a deep one.'

" Soon after, we rose from the feast to attend parade, and the duke said,

" 'You accompany me to-night to a masked ball, given by Baroness Warentza. I shall present you; it is a house you ought to frequent.'

" This was too much: I was about to excuse myself from the intended honour, but Casimir saw my design, and, seizing my arm, pinched it hard. I understood him, and most reluctantly bowed my assent.

CHAPTER V.

"Mine after life! What is mine after life?
My day is closed! The gloom of night is come!
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate!
I've seen the last look of her heavenly eyes!
I've heard the last sounds of her blessed voice!"

Joanna Baillie.

"'Why, Baron,' exclaimed Vallenstein, as we walked off to parade, 'what an impracticable fellow are you to deal with! If I had not been on the alert, you would have refused to go to the ball! I tell you, Sir, these matters are imperative! Have patience, and the bonds which fret you so much will slacken by degrees. At present many eyes are upon you, and it behoves you to be circumspect!'

"'Count Casimir, why have you installed me in the post you ought to fill—the post on which your active, manly

spirit, and martial ardour, would have reflected such splendor? I shall make but a poor figure in it, for, to say truth, the utmost scope of my ambition is to get through my day's work creditably. How can I pursue, with success, any visible prize, when a voice, heard only by myself, sweeter than any melody the earth owns, summons me without ceasing?'

"'Alas, poor Marchfeldt! I did suspect as much. From the moment I beheld you first, I was sure you were unhappy! Nay, I was convinced too, that the step you were taking was desperate, and that you only threw yourself amongst us to drown, in the noise of a camp, the whispers of remembrance. Though young, I have been long a soldier; I have never loved, have never heaved a sigh for sorrow of my own: I will sigh for yours, Marchfeldt; you shall divide it with me. Hoarded treasure is ever mischievous to the owner. It shall be my care to

relieve you from many a burthen, that the exigencies of our situation would lay upon you,—in return, use me as a brother!'

"The last word echoed on my ear:—'Vallensteïn,' said I, 'would to God you were my brother!'

"'Why?' cried he. 'It is of little importance whether we were rocked in the same cradle, I take it. This unforced fraternity suits my fancy well enough. 'There is a friend,' saith Solomon, 'who sticks closer than a brother!'

"'But you have never loved, Casimir! I doubt if we can understand each other. How can you sympathise with one, whose whole soul is love—who has lived upon it—who must die for it—who is dead already to all the intents and purposes of this life?'

"'Mark me, dear Marchfeldt! It is true I have never loved; yet I do not mean to quit this planet of ours, on which it pleases Wolfsteïn to bestow so many opprobrious epithets, without experiencing

the sweetest sensation of which man's nature is capable;—a passion at once pure and fervent. My heart, by some instinct or other, has discovered that there remains for it a happiness as yet unexplored, and often dreams thereof. It is odd enough, I own, that none of the angels I have seen have awakened in me more than transient admiration; but my time is not yet come, I suppose. By the by, you will see a fine creature to-night, with whom we are all in love, and who, in her fashion, loves many, but herself most.'

"We repaired to the Warentza hotel, almost immediately on our return from parade: it was a superb edifice, containing extensive suites of apartments, magnificently adorned; indeed, the interior decorations of this palace gave it the air rather of the habitation of a Moorish voluptuary, than of a German lady. One extremity of the ball-room contained an orchestra, consisting of almost

every instrument of music fitted for the saloon; the other opened into spacious and delicious gardens, still *à-la-moresque*, with shady groves, marble fountains, and orange bowers; and stationed behind their leafy screens were several horns, and other wind instruments, contributed by the military guests. On the entrance of Casimir and myself, the duke, who seemed waiting for us, led me to the baroness, to whom he presented me with very flattering expressions of esteem, which were returned on her part with an elegant compliment, uttered in a voice whose honied sweetness sounded like the effect of practice. My first glance was hastily withdrawn, for you cannot imagine, Louisa, with what fearless undaunted scrutiny she examined the countenance of a stranger. To me, accustomed to all that was delicate, refined, and modest in female manners, the gaze, I may almost call it ardent, of the Baroness Warentza was

most oppressive, and I shrank from it instinctively. Yet I have seldom, perhaps never, seen any thing so dazzling as the meridian loveliness of this lady: her costume, like the furniture of her palace, was Moorish, and though many other ladies were present, in different fancy dresses, all more or less becoming, she was the Armida of the scene,—the eclipsing planet. As I stood marvelling at the difference perceptible amongst beings of the same species and sex, casting a comparative glance towards the towers of Marchfeldt, I was roused from my unseasonable musings by the voice of Wolfsteïn.

" 'Courage, Sir!' said he: 'you are a little disordered, I perceive, by a *coup de soleil.* They are *common* in this atmosphere, and not *very* dangerous.'

" I had always remarked a touch of irony in the speech of Wolfsteïn; but his tone, at that moment, was pregnant with gall. The baroness felt it, for her cheek

betrayed that she did, even through the artificial blush which covered it.

"'Ah!' cried she, 'I perceive you are in one of your unaccountable moods to-night! But *do* remember, Chevalier, that I detest a cynic!'

"'Not more, madam, than I detest a trifler, male or female! You dance, I suppose? That is of course.'

"'Why yes, Wolfsteïn, I cannot avoid it, you know: I am engaged to waltz with the duke.'

"Right, madam, right! But why waltz? You can't pretend to rival Fanfarina, waltz as you will! Your ancle is as well turned, too, *almost*, as hers, I think; and the turn of your neck is graceful enough.—I know not, for my part, where you fail. These are all matters of taste: Fanfarina! pretty Fanfarina! Well, I will mark you critically, Baroness. Who knows but I may discover where lies the difference?'

"There was something indescribably strange and singular in the insolence

with which all this was uttered. Fanfarina is a ballet dancer at Vienna, and one whom it was every way insulting to name in competition with any woman of character. I was confounded, and scarcely knew whether it was not my province to interfere; but the demeanour of the baroness surprised me almost as much as that of Wolfstein: her bosom swelled with vexation, till I thought it would have burst the diamond clasp which fastened her vest; tears rushed into her eyes, and the flushing of her cheek must have been painful; yet, in spite of resentment, something like deprecating tenderness was mingled in her agitation as she murmured,

" 'Perverse and injurious! But you shall repent this, Sir! I will not be insulted with impunity!"

" 'Nay, why be angry, Baroness? You know it chafes not me! You well know my humour. Those who smile on me, must smile on no other! But go! the

duke seeks you—you must go waltz, madam!'

"'But, Wolfsteïn, how could I avoid it?'

"'True, madam, true! But why not waltz? It is a pretty, animating, blood-circulating exercise! Waltz, by all means! I never waltz, nor shall the woman I love ever waltz; but why *you* should not, upon my soul, Baroness, it puzzles me to guess!'

"The duke at that moment advanced, and, taking the hand of the baroness, led her to the centre of the room. I felt pained for her; I could not doubt that the sneering misanthropical Wolfsteïn had acquired a powerful and oppressing influence in her bosom, and, agitated as I had seen her, I deemed it impossible she could perform the task of exhibition she had undertaken; but, my Louisa, I soon found myself no less a novice in the ball-room than in the camp: to my astonishment, Baroness Warentza exe-

cuted her waltz with all the skill of the opera, mingled with a grace and sentiment peculiarly her own: but I thought, with Wolfstein, I could not behold the woman I esteemed thus exhibited. Applauses echoed through the room; and the cheek of the baroness was now as highly flushed with triumph, as it had lately been with resentment and provocation. As her noble partner led her to a seat, she returned his flattering compliments with a look of grateful delight: in short, I knew not what to think of her. As for Casimir, he was engaged in flirting, chatting, flattering, and waltzing: I could not inquire of him, and I stood leaning against a pillar, wreathed with roses and evergreens, carelessly watching the gay groups that flitted by. The pressure of a light hand on my arm, and the sweet and liquid accents of the baroness, aroused me.

"'You dance, surely, Baron? Try one turn of the waltz with me.'

" Something impelled me to throw a glance round the room in search of Wolfsteïn, but he had disappeared.

" 'Lady,' replied I, 'take it not amiss that I resist your flattering challenge. Amongst all these gay gallants, Baron Marchfeldt is little more than a breathing automaton.'

" 'Ah!' said she, 'if that is the case, we must find some Prometheus to animate so fair a machine. We shall breathe a soul into you, I doubt not, Baron!' But with a voice of gentle intreaty, '*Will* you not dance? Are you inflexible?'

" 'It is not a thing of choice, madam!' said I, coldly: 'it is impossible!'

" 'Then be it so, Baron,' said the fair Warentza, haughtily: 'we must forgive a little provincial rusticity; it is an incrustation which often conceals a valuable gem. We shall live to see you such as *we* are!'

" 'Never, madam!'

" '*Eh bien! c'est égale!*' and she left

me to pursue my reveries. Presently Wolfsteïn came from behind the opposite pillar, passed his arm through mine, and directed his course towards the garden.

" 'What are you made of, Baron? Are you wrapped in asbestos, or are you a salamander? Do you defy the eyes of woman, roll they never so brightly, languish they never so tenderly? What charm do you wear? Not that I mean to borrow it; but the desire of knowledge, a philosophic spirit of inquiry, prompts me to ask.'

" 'I do not understand you, Chevalier!'

" 'Nor I you, Baron: but, by Heaven, I will before we have done with each other; though I begin to doubt whether you are worth the pains, whether you have more or less in you than your fellows! Do you know, Marchfeldt, that I have in turn adopted every creed that the wit of the few or the credulity of the many have brought into fashion, since

Father Noah's era. The metempsychosis had its reign; and positively, as I watched you a few minutes since, it came into my head that you could be no other than a resuscitation of that worthy, dispassionate gentleman, who stood for half a century on the top of a pillar! One thing you *can* tell me, as it is matter of fact. Did you not, even now, with barbarian cruelty, resist and repel the advances of a fair lady? Did not the Warentza solicit you to lead her through a waltz? And did not you, most discourteous knight, repulse the lovely petitioner?'

" 'This, Chevalier, is somewhat too much!' exclaimed I. 'My patience has its limits, and you are treading hard upon them! I will not answer a question you have no right to ask.'

" 'Bravo! bravo! You are not made up then only of earth, air, and water, but have your portion of fire! A proper fellow, in whom all the elements are to be found,

though somewhat oddly mixed! "But you *were* solicited, Baron! For your refusal to answer my question says yes, more distinctly than a coxcomb's avowal would do. That woman—that Warentza! Nature has made a bewitching creature of her! And why should I rail that she has no soul, since women have none! if they had, they would be intolerable.'

" 'No souls, Chevalier! Women no souls! I would not so think, for all this world holds precious.'

" 'I understand you, Baron. *You* have found a woman with a soul! Well, that *may* be,—a *lusus naturæ*. I, for my part, believe nothing—and every thing! I never *saw* a Phœnix; but what does that signify? Such a bird *may* exist—nay, I have met with travellers who very gravely aver that it does, and far be it from me to contradict them. I observed you at dinner, and one thing I discovered, which this evening confirms—*your* soul, if you have one, has got a fur-

lough. It has had calls this day that would otherwise have roused it into action. Ambition, vanity, are either quite extinct within you, or very fast asleep. By my honour, Marchfeldt, you are a lucky fellow. I take it, you have known all the delicious blindness of love, and she to whom you were indebted for the heavenly illusion, vanished ere your eyes opened: thus, *you* are eternally a lover, and *she* has obtained her apotheosis! I think I have a clue to you. Now I will give you a riddle: guess it if you can. How comes it, think you, that I, Chevalier Wolfsteïn, walk apparently defenceless amongst men, a distinct and separated being? Here I am, you see, in the midst of a camp, a privileged spectator! It is the same in courts. Regardless of the powers that be, I crouch not, I flatter not! Every man feels he has no fellow in Wolfsteïn. The gross of mankind instinctively shrink beneath my glance, for I hate fools, and

the gross of mankind are fools! Look you, Baron, here comes folly, unadulterated.'

"A pretty, conceited youth approached us with an air of bustling importance.

"'Ah, Chevalier!' cried he, 'there you are. I have had a fine search for you, and began to despair of success! But, why do you hide yourself? The beautiful Warentza is positively drooping; a cloud obscures the fair face! I heard her inquire if any one had seen you, and volunteered myself her Mercury.'

"'Really, Margrave,' said Wolfsteïn, throwing on the luckless messenger a glance of withering scorn, 'your mission is of that weight and dignity, as well befits the capacity of such an ambassador. Having disburthened yourself thereof, my humanity prompts me to send you back *empty*.'

"And he turned away, saying, loud enough for him to hear, 'By Saturnius, I would rather be the blast which shrivels

and scatters such insects, than the sun which fosters them.'

"The gardens were now brilliantly illuminated, and the dancers crowded into them. Casimir joined us: I saw Wolfsteïn whisper in his ear, and he replied aloud,

"'No, no, Wolfsteïn! You and I must hunt in separate tracts! Our game is very different! I am no playmate for you! I have no taste for *experiments.*'

"'How should you, being one of the million—less fit to act, than to be acted on?'

"'I have proved, however, Chevalier, that I have wit enough to thwart your operations; and, as to will, it remains to be seen if yours or mine has the ascendant.'

"'At least, Sir,' said Wolfsteïn, with a look of dark meaning, 'you have placed yourself in a predicament you would perhaps have avoided, had you compre-

hended it! I am lavish of my contempt, but he may be proud whom I honour with my hatred. It is likely, Count Casimir, you do not understand the word, more than as an empty phrase, since it belongs only to master spirits to hate effectually. I will teach you its utmost signification, Count Casimir!'

"There was something portentous and deadly both in the look and words of Wolfsteïn: his cheek was white as marble—even his lips were blanched; but his tone was cold, calm, and deliberate. I shuddered as I beheld and listened to him, and, aware as I was that Vallensteïn was highly incensed, I endeavoured to interfere between them.

"'Nay, Baron,' said Wolfsteïn, with a sneer, 'set your gentle heart at rest. We will shed no blood! Vallensteïn knows I will not fight—brutes fight—men fight! and, therefore, Wolfsteïn fights not!'

"'No!' exclaimed Vallensteïn, fiercely, 'Demons have slower and more refined methods of destruction!'

"'Right, Sir!' said the Chevalier; 'and now, good night, gentlemen! I have led a listless life for some time. I pined for an impulse, and, I thank you—you have supplied me.'

"'By my soul,' cried Casimir, 'I have not misnamed that fellow—he *is* a demon! The dissection of a living human heart is his delight. He marked you for his prey; but there I have foiled him. What predominant influence he possesses I cannot guess; but he has ruined many a fine young fellow. Infidel himself, his business is perversion. Nature has endowed him with a powerful, brilliant genius, only, as it should seem, to make him more surely, more fatally destructive: but the most singular part of this mystery is, the impunity, the privilege, which places him by the side of the greatest men of the day!—My

father, for instance. Wolfstein has a distinction with him, which few of the princes and nobles of his army can aspire to. I do not understand it—but so it is. The women idolize him: he is at once their delight and their terror. Of the Emperor he speaks in the most insulting, the most degrading terms—and every one knows it; yet he stands audaciously amongst crowds of courtiers, unquestioned for his disloyalty! But why should his disrespect for an earthly sovereign surprise, when he dares question the existence of the God who made him—or, carrying his rash impiety still farther, represents him as an evil spirit, whose habitation is darkness and whose will is destruction? His egotism is most offensive and disgusting! Hear him talk, and you would suppose there is but one soul in the universe—the one which informs and enlightens him! But if I proceed, Marchfeldt, you will deem me actuated by revenge; and so far it is

true, that passion has hurried me into a description which I meant to have deferred till you could observe him awhile for yourself: yet am I guilty of no exaggeration.'

" 'I wish, Casimir, you had not provoked the malignity of such a being.—What evil may not result from this night's dispute!'

" 'For that matter, be assured, Marchfeldt, what you have witnessed must, sooner or later, have happened. The feelings he this night openly expressed towards me have long been secretly nourished: the storm has been some time gathering! Besides, so warned, and knowing my adversary, I must be weak indeed to allow of a surprise.—One word more, however, on this odious theme. You mark his cold, disdainful temper, his insulting treatment even of that half of the creation whom it is man's province to protect and cherish. Yet the pathos of his madrigals and love-laments

is unparalleled! Our young soldiers sing them by moonlight, and the ladies—dear souls! are sure that the author is a most divine creature.'

"'Well, Vallensteïn!' said I, 'I would we had never met! I am troubled and harassed, and full of gloomy misgivings. Let us hence! for, surely, even you must be weary.'

"'No,' replied he, gaily, 'not a whit! Soldiers know no weariness! We must yet await our general's pleasure—but see, he is retiring, and we will do likewise.'

CHAPTER VI.

"God be wi' you! Let us meet as little as we can. I do desire we may be better strangers!"

As you Like it.

"EVERY day brought some new proof of Casimir's friendship, every day brought fresh conviction of his worth. Yon sparkling azure firmament, Louisa, is a just emblem of the bright, unclouded purity of his mind!—I do not believe he harbours a thought which Heaven might not smile on. Bold, gay, enterprising, he openly avowed his contempt of dissipation, his detestation of all that tends to brutalise or debase man's nature. Count Vallensteïn was beheld by his father with exulting affection, and in return almost deified his father; yet Vallensteïn had no distinguished rank in the army, being simply the colonel of a regiment, nor did

he possess any obvious privileges:—that his secret influence, however, was of no negative force, I had occasion to prove; for after the first few days I found myself the object of almost unlimited indulgence. My friend and Zollendorff transacted all my military business, and I was no longer compelled to mix in revels, against which my sick spirit revolted. Casimir watched my retirement, and guarded it with a fraternal tenderness which ought never to be forgotten. Louisa, *you* must remember it; for 'when the breath of man goeth forth, he turneth again to his earth, and then all his thoughts perish.'"

"My dearest brother, fear not that Louisa can forget the friend of her Wilhelm." "Within a week," returned the Baron, "after the ball at the Hotel de Warentza, a vexatious incident occurred. —You will readily conceive, that I held no intercourse with the professed foe of Casimir: a slight bow passed between us

when we met, and I believe verily, that had the enemy of mankind stood visibly before me, I should not have regarded him with more abhorrence. I resumed my visits to the Forest of Falconberg, sometimes accompanied by Casimir, but for the most part alone, for between my duty and his own, my friend led a laborious life. It chanced one evening as I sate musing under the wide spreading shade of a tree in the very heart of the wood, gazing alternately on your miniature and that of Blanche by the light which a waning yet brilliant moon shed through the foliage, I was startled by the whistling of a bullet which passed me so near, as almost to graze my arm, and which was followed on the instant by a deep and hideous howl. I sprang astonished on my feet, and turning towards the sound, saw a large he-wolf, which had lurked in a thicket within a yard of my station, in the agonies of death, the bullet having entered its throat. Wolf-

stein, with the discharged pistol in his hand, came slowly up, and touching his cap, said coldly, 'Good even, Baron.'

"When I beheld by whom my life was saved, I almost spurned the obligation, and it was not without a struggle that I uttered something like an acknowledgment. 'Nay, spare yourself the trouble, Baron Marchfeldt!' returned he. 'I fancy you hardly deem the gift worth thanks: I rather ought to ask your pardon for my officious interference, in forcing on you that which you are weary of!'

"'You are a good marksman, Chevalier!'

"'Yes!' replied he, in his usual significant accent, 'I seldom aim without hitting!'

"His eye dwelt on the picture I still held in my hand: it was that of Blanche: yours had fallen amongst the grass.

"'Permit me, Baron, one glance at the fair object of your contemplation!'

"'Chevalier, you have saved my life,

and it seems ungracious to deny a request apparently unimportant, but there is something sacred in this picture. It may not be submitted to your gaze!'

"While I spoke, I was intently searching the tall, rank grass for my other miniature.—Wolfsteïn perceived that I sought for something, and in spite of my repulsive conduct, silently but diligently commenced the same employment. Scarcely in my life have I experienced a feeling of such bitter provocation as I did at that moment, combined with a strange mysterious terror of, I knew not what.—All my anxiety was to supersede his search: I could not bear to think of his beholding your portrait! Oh, Louisa! why is it, that whenever by any accident his idea and yours are associated in my mind, my heart turns sick?"

"But, dear brother, has not your prejudice a little discoloured the character of Wolfstein? Did he not save your life—the life of one whom he knew detested him?

And was there no virtue in the act?—Nay—be more just, my brother!"

Wilhelm groaned inwardly, and in an instant Louisa beheld him stretched fainting at her feet. In this situation she was obliged to leave him, while she flew down the turret stairs to procure some water.—With the aid of her women she soon recovered him, and, when his recollection entirely returned, "Oh Louisa!" said he, "never, never, if you love your brother, couple Wolfsteïn's name with words of indulgence and palliation!—Louisa! the dread of that man's influence on your destiny will scatter thorns on my dying pillow! No, do not contend with me! The presage is strong, and your argument will but strengthen it. Send your women away, and I will resume my story."

"But you are feeble, Wilhelm—delay the sequel till to-morrow."

"No, Louisa, I am eager to tell it now."

The attendants were dismissed, and thus he resumed:

" In spite of my diligence, the lynx eye of Wolfstein first discovered the treasure I was so bent on concealing from him. He snatched it with exulting insolence, and stood for some moments intently gazing on your features: then, turning to me, ' This,' said he, ' I conjecture is the semblance of your sister, the lovely Louisa of Marchfeldt.'

" ' Whoever it may resemble,' replied I, ' now, that you have satisfied your curiosity, I must require your restoration of that which you have long enough detained.'

" ' But I have not satisfied my curiosity, Baron! You are not aware, peradventure, how great a connoisseur I am in beauty:—I must look and look again. Do you suppose I can be satisfied with such an examination of this bewitching countenance as the dim light of yon wan-faced planet permits? Besides, you see even that is failing.—No, this is no light for the study of such a picture!' And,

to my inexpressible astonishment and indignation, he quietly and deliberately deposited the miniature in the bosom of his vest.—Choking with wrath, I demanded his meaning.

" 'Do not alarm yourself, Baron, I beseech you!' cried he. 'Your miniature is perfectly safe! I want to study it, I tell you! It is an exquisite bit of ivory!—I have seen it by moonlight,—I want to see it by the midnight lamp, and by the dawning sun; but I pledge myself that to-morrow I will honourably restore it into your hands. Till then, Sir, no power on earth shall wrest that picture from me!'

" I was convinced that I could not help myself:—it is true I had a sabre by my side and a dagger in my girdle; but, irritated as I was, I could not lift a hostile hand against the man who had so recently delivered me from the fangs of an animal little more ferocious than himself. I made, however, another effort.

" 'Chevalier!' said I, 'I throw myself

on your generosity. I *entreat* you restore that picture!'

" 'Has young Vallenstein seen it?'

" 'No, he has not.'

" 'Indeed! And have you as great an objection to its enduring the violation of his glance as that of Wolfsteïn?'

" 'Chevalier, will you restore my picture?'

" 'Why, yes, Baron, I will restore it—but not till to-morrow.'

" 'Good night then, Sir!' said I, and again flung myself at the foot of the tree.

" 'No, Baron! You will no doubt execrate me for a nuisance, but I shall not bid you good night in this wood. The gentleman who was so near making his supper upon you has many friends and connexions in the neighbourhood as hungry as himself, and they do not always attack singly.—You see how dark it grows! If you have any preference with regard to your place of sepulture I would not advise you to linger here another half hour—

if you do, the wolves will effectually save the sexton his office!—For my part, I never enter this forest late without a brace of loaded pistols in my belt.'

"In short, Louisa, harassed, baffled, careless whither I went, and anxious only to rid myself of his odious society, I rose, and we walked in silence, broken but by the exchange of the watch-word at the several posts, till I reached my quarters, when Wolfsteïn said,

"'Now good night, Baron! I will not fail to wait on you after morning parade.' And away he darted.

"In a state of mind inconceivably tormenting, I paced my apartment;—sometimes I thought of going to confer with Casimir on the insupportable behaviour of Wolfsteïn; but, aware of the fiery indignation it would excite in him, I relinquished the idea: besides, I knew not in what quarter of the camp he might be engaged, and half the night might be wasted in seeking him. I had lately discovered

that my intense and habitual mental suffering was frequently accompanied by something correspondent in my corporeal frame, especially a violent and rapid palpitation of my heart, that seemed to augment the agitation of which it was the effect: this symptom now attacked me with unusual force, and in order to counteract the intolerable restlessness that possessed me, I swallowed a large dose of opium, and wrapping myself in my cloak, threw myself on a couch, and at length obtained a happy oblivion of my cares. An unaccustomed noise in my room waked me with a start, and when I could sufficiently throw off the oppression of my artificial slumber to look about me, I perceived by the glare of a couple of lamps that two men were in my chamber. I watched their motions with astonishment and in silence for a few moments, as they seemed so intently occupied in relieving some of my trunks of their contents that they paid little regard to the continuance of

my repose: indeed, besides the noise within my chamber, judging by the stunning variety of sounds which assailed my ears, general confusion prevailed without. My sabre lay on a chair unsheathed beside me: I seized it, and was in an instant on my feet, prepared to make an effort to deliver myself from such unceremonious visitors.—The noise I made in springing from my couch disturbed the robbers: they turned round, and, to my surprise, I beheld the countenances of Vallensteïn and Conrade, for so effectually were their persons disguised by the weight of their accoutrements, that only their faces were recognizable.

" 'Good morrow, good morrow, my dear fellow!' exclaimed the former. 'We have no doubt surprised you: I would not awake you till it was absolutely necessary—You have a day's work before you, and only the Powers above can tell where you will sleep to-night. Conrade and I have prepared your accoutrements

like faithful squires:—all is ready, from helm to spur!—The gallant Mirza is neighing and prancing at the door! Zollendorff is on horseback at the head of your brave Marchfeldters, in all the phlegmatic determination of a German lieutenant, his pulse never beating half a stroke quicker than if he were puffing his segar in his own cabin on the banks of the Raab. You must have slept like the dead, or the repeated flourish of the reveille, the discharge of artillery, braying of trumpets, and mustering of men, would have disturbed you!'

"'The enemy are at hand then?' said I, as mechanically I began to dress myself.

"'Not exactly, I fancy; but they are not far off, and we must find them.'

"There was a mixture of thought and animation in Casimir's countenance I had never remarked in it before: when I was dressed,

"'Now,' said he, 'dear Marchfeldt, all is ready! The van set forward an hour

ago—The left wing is now beginning its march—My regiment and yours are by this time a mile off, but a few minutes will bring us up with them.—Marchfeldt, you are not accustomed to the *mêlée* of battle.—I do not ask you to preserve your presence of mind, since it does not appear to me possible you should lose it; only, under all circumstances, stick close to your horse. Let nothing unseat you. Neglect not this precept, and then, my noble Wilhelm, we shall shake hands again I doubt not!'

" 'Ay, master!' said Conrade, 'Mirza is such a capering beast, and he'll be in such a passion if he gets a wound, that you must keep a good look out, or he'll have you out of the saddle! And do,—bless you, dear master, be minding what you are about, and not thinking of things that cannot be helped!—Forgive me for mentioning her, your honour, but if the Lady Blanche, Heaven rest her sweet soul! knows what is going on, she is

watching, you may be sure, for your Lordship's honour and safety!'

"The poor fellow, overcome between his fear of my displeasure that he should dare to utter a name so sacred, and his mixed anxiety for his master's renown and preservation, burst into tears. His mention of that prohibited name at such a moment served to endear him to me, and I pressed him to my heart.

"'Now we will be off!' said Vallensteïn. 'Wilhelm! I have had no sinister hint, but I always bid farewell to provide for consequences; so Heaven and all good angels guard thee, dear Wilhelm!'

"'And master, master!' cried Conrade, as we descended the stairs, presenting an Agnus which he had untied from his own neck, 'just pop this into your bosom.' We were soon mounted, and rode so hard, that, as Casimir had augured, a few minutes brought us up with our men; we then slackened our pace, and I said,

" 'My friend, I have one request for you: should this day bring my task on earth to a conclusion, and you survive,—promise me, that you will make Wolfsteïn surrender into your hands my sister's picture, which he has most insolently wrested from me.'

" 'Wrested from you, Baron!' echoed he, with a look of vexed surprise: 'How could that be?'

" 'Yes, wrested from me! Having first disarmed me of the means to vindicate my own right! But I have no time to explain—Say you grant my request, and having obtained the picture, will, with your own hand, restore it to that of Louisa of Marchfeldt.'

" 'I call the Holy Virgin to witness, that if I survive, I will execute your will. Conrade, should Mirza be shot, be alert! Remount your master as quickly as possible!' and waving his hand, he galloped to the head of his regiment.

" There is something so impressive,

so awakening, in the hostile march of a well dressed, well organised army, that, as I joined my men, I could not help feeling some faint rekindling of the thoughts and emotions of happy days, when *my* heart beat as ardently to the hopes of future glory as that of any youthful captain in this huge multitude of warriors. Nor could I refrain from reflecting, with somewhat of the pride of a military novice, on the singular transformation which the tactical skill of Zollendorff had produced among the rustics of Marchfeldt, for there were no troops in the Duke's army better disciplined, better mounted, or, what is best of all, stronger hearted, than my own peasantry. As we advanced, the roaring of artillery towards the banks of the Sala informed us that our advance was engaged with the enemy. The Duke had despatched a herald to Prince Schaumberg, ordering him to send forward, with all expedition, a few picked regiments, to make a diversion,

his left being outflanked by the Bohemians, &c. who, having obtained possession of a wood, pressed him very hard in that quarter. Casimir had, of course, eagerly petitioned to be sent on this duty; and the Prince not only granted his request, but likewise, at his suggestion, ordered my division, which consisted of three regiments, to push forward with all celerity. Such was young Vallensteïn's anxiety to fly to the relief of his noble father, that I believe I owed the distinction rather to his opinion of the superior strength and speed of our horses, than to any feeling of private friendship. We set forward, and charged upon the wood on a gallop. My Marchfeldters behaved gloriously. The rebels, who expected nothing less than our approach, were fatally surprised: and, in less than half an hour, all the troops that were stationed in the wood were either stretched beneath our horses' feet or flying before us in the utmost disorder.

" I do not wish, Louisa, to give you a detailed account of our battles: suffice it to say, that Count Mansfeldt effected a hasty and disorderly retreat, with the shattered remains of his army; and we, completely masters of the field, reposed that night within the walls of Halle, the keys of the town being, with all submission, tendered to the conqueror. As we rode into the town, a subaltern officer made his way through the press—

" 'Colonel,' said he, 'I am ordered by the general to tell you he gives a supper to-night to the chief magistrates and the officers of the garrison. He expects his own field-officers, and says, that to-night he cannot possibly dispense with the company of Baron Marchfeldt.'

" Only the centre and part of the left wing of our army had been engaged, and these were now drawn up within the walls of Halle. Men and horses were woefully fatigued; yet the regular form of a parade was still to be gone through, and

the loss of each regiment to be ascertained by reference to the muster-roll. The vacancy to me, inexperienced in the bloody work of war, seemed awful, although it was pronounced inconsiderable; and I perceived that the result of this scrutiny added no small zest to the happiness of the victor. The Duke rode round the square, distributing his thanks and praises.

"'Count Vallenstein,' said he, as he approached his son, and his voice faltered with emotion, "I am *satisfied* with you, sir; your men and their leader are worthy of each other.

"For myself, I knew only that I had done my best and fulfilled my orders, and was totally unprepared to find myself the object of marked approbation; I own, therefore, my sensations were almost overwhelming when our gallant general cried aloud—

"'By you, Baron Marchfeldt, by the spirited and resistless charge made by

your division, at a very critical moment, was this day's fortune decided! I thank you, sir; and request you to accept my congratulations on this glorious commencement of your military career. Take my advice—go rest for an hour; I shall want you at supper. Meantime our brave old friend Zollendorff will be on duty for you.'

"He left me, and I joined Zollendorff, who, elated far beyond his usual pitch, ordered my men to cheer. When this tumultuous salutation subsided,

"'Henrich Zollendorff,' said I, 'tell me, have I behaved like a changeling, or will you now own me for the son of Baron Ulric?'

"'I would blow any man into the air who dared ask the question, but yourself!'

"'That is enough, my friend.' And, attended by my faithful Conrade, who was crying, laughing, and apparently half deranged, I sought such quarters

as the confusion of the time afforded; and, having found them, gladly disencumbered myself of my weighty equipments, and resigned myself to an hour's repose. I was already risen much refreshed, and prepared to sally forth, when Casimir entered, his eyes bright with triumph.

" 'Marchfeldt, I am very proud of you,' said he, as he pressed me to his heart; 'I knew you would acquit yourself creditably, but never dreamed you would distinguish yourself as you have done.'

" 'I do verily believe,' replied I, 'I am indebted for such distinction to the manœuvres of the same man to whom I owe my post in the army.'

" 'So far,' said Casimir, 'you are right; I solicited for you, and for myself, a duty to which signal honour, or signal disgrace, would inevitably attach; but how we should come off in the business was a question of individual merit.

We must not stand arguing here, however, but away to the banquet.'

"The only incident to be recorded of this banquet which will interest you, Louisa, occurred immediately on our sitting down to table: a golden dish and cover was handed to the general by one of his pages of honour.

"'It is well,' said the Duke, smiling; 'carry it to Baron Marchfeldt.'

"I lifted the cover, and found beneath it a pair of gold spurs.

"'Yes, Baron,' said he, replying to the grateful look with which I regarded him, 'you have fairly maintained your knighthood; wear these in memory of this day's achievements.'

CHAPTER VII.

" What is this quintessence of dust—this paragon of animals?"

Hamlet.

" The duke resolved to remain a few days, to refresh and rest his troops, in the pleasant town of Halle, which stands on the brow of a vine-covered hill, at whose foot flows the Sala. The morning after the conflict, Vallenstein proposed our walking together to the field of battle, and I consented. My first emotion, as I contemplated a scene so ghastly, was a shudder of horror: but, as I gazed, my eye by degrees became reconciled; and, when nature's thrill had passed over me, the musings which succeeded were, though mournful, far from unpleasing. I contrasted the deep and solemn silence now reigning with the wild contentious

tumult of yesterday—the roar of guns, the clash of sabres, the loud hoarse menace, the trampling rush of the charging horse. All this was over, and a strange stillness prevailed. Near the spot where I stood lay a young hussar, whose years could scarce have numbered twenty; he was a handsome, manly figure. The mortal stroke had probably been too suddenly inflicted even to allow his countenance to take the impression of pain: if it *had* worn it, it was gone; for such an indescribable calm sate upon his features as communicated itself even to my feelings, as I stood absorbed in the contemplation. Vallensteïn heaved a deep sigh.

"'Poor fellow!' said he, 'this is ruthless work, God knows! This boy, no doubt, has been the pride, and is now the despair, of some fond mother. Some pretty girl is now vainly counting her beads for his safety, and vainly dreams of his return. Well: such things have been since the

beginning of the world, and such things will be till men are metamorphosed into angels. Battle, like revelry, is pleasant enough in the anticipation and in the act, but odious the morning after. How can you gaze so steadily on the lifeless face of that beautiful boy?—It sickens my heart to look at him.'

" 'Into mine it sheds a strange consolation, Casimir. You, warm in life, full of gay hopes and brilliant presages, who scarcely guess at sorrow; you may sigh over his fate—I envy it!'

" Near the young hussar lay a gray-headed veteran: the grasp of his dead hand had stiffened upon the hilt of his sabre; and his features, fixed as they were in the sleep which wakes not, bore probably the same character they exhibited before the soul which informed them had fled away—that of hard inflexible resolution. He had many wounds, and his silver hair was steeped in gore.

" 'I know not why,' said Casimir, 'I

should visit this scene of devastation, like some demon, to brood over the destruction I have assisted in causing; but it is a custom, and I am not sure that the thoughts such scenes excite are not salutary. But let us hence, Marchfeldt. In truth it overcomes me—it is too awful!'

" As we turned we perceived Sir Warbeck of Wolfstein standing near us, and engaged apparently in a similar contemplation.

" 'Yes,' said he, echoing Casimir's last words, 'it is awful! Here,' added he, taking out his watch, 'here *is*, or *was*, as fine and subtle a piece of mechanism as any in the world. It was a faithful, useful companion, an unerring remembrancer and monitor. Its vital pulse, however, is stopped—the spring is broken. All pulses *will* stop, all springs *will* break. And, either by violence or time, all machines, however skilful and subtle the mechanist, will cease to act, like those

on the ground before you—like this in my hand! Oh! Baron, I rejoice to perceive your wheels are still in motion; and my congratulations are truly disinterested. Had you fallen yesterday, *you* would now be sleeping with the brave, and *I* should not be under the painful necessity of redeeming my honour, by restoring into your hands this copy (if the painter be a true man and no flatterer) of the sweetest original ever moulded by the hand of nature.'

"'Your detention of that picture, sir,' said I, 'even had I not survived to demand it, would have been a dishonourable outrage. But I did not go into battle without providing for such a contingency. My friend, Count Casimir of Vallenstein, was pledged to procure your surrender of that picture; since it was to him I confided the office of depositing it in the hands of my sister, and of bearing her my last adieu.

"'That was not wise, Baron. Count

Vallenstein's trade is war; and these are days when Mars has cut out work enough for all his sons. Now *I* am an idle fellow, and rarely find a task suited to my fastidious taste;—that mission was made on purpose for me! In proportion to my indifference to things in general is my ardour when once excited. I promised to restore the picture to *you;* but, had you ceased to breathe, would have restored it to no man breathing. Nay, frown not, gentlemen. I am but supposing a case which does not exist; and you are not acquainted yet with half my audacity. I dreamed, last night, I received that very miniature, or one wondrous like it, from the alabaster hand of the fair original.'

" 'A lying vision, sir,' said I, 'believe me. The mere vapour of your own consummate presumption.'

" 'Why it is very possible,' replied he slowly, with a look of deep malice,

'that you may not live to see the oracle accomplished.'

"'Sir Warbeck,' said Vallenstein, 'from this hour I forswear your society! In public I *must* endure your presence—but wherever we meet, be it as strangers. I will not exchange the slightest word, the merest courtesy, with you. The world has space enough for both—why should we jostle each other?'

"'For that matter, you say justly, Count.—Why should we jostle? I have made many a man feel me without any visible contact, and intend to do so again!'

"Thus saying, he took off his cap, made a low bow, and quitted us.

"'Marchfeldt,' said Casimir, somewhat carelessly, as we turned towards the town, 'let me have a peep at that picture.'

"'Nay,' replied I, piqued by the coldness with which the request was made, 'it is not worth asking for.'

" 'You are an unaccountable fellow,' said he, misconstruing the flush on my cheek. 'I believed it was only that odious Wolfsteïn who caused your tenacity; but he has excited my curiosity, and I just wish to ascertain if his raptures are merely affected for the purpose of tormenting you, or whether there is cause sufficient in this little case. If the latter, Louisa of Marchfeldt must look to herself—persecution, in one shape or other, awaits her.'

" Saying which, he opened the case. I think he stood at least five minutes, intently tracing your features; and then, closing the case, silently returned it. Till we reached the gates he appeared to be lost in the deepest reverie, while I waited, in angry suspense, till he should find utterance.

" 'My sister's features,' said I, at length, 'have seldom been looked on with indifference, either in the copy or the original.'

" 'By Heaven!' said Casimir, turning me suddenly round, 'this is most unlucky!—The eyes of that basilisk ought never to have rested on those features! Without any true feeling, any soft or generous sentiment, Wolfstein is a keen pursuer of female loveliness. Why on earth, Marchfeldt, were you so bewitched as to suffer that miniature out of your grasp for an instant? But it is fruitless to fret and fume—the mischief is done! Wilhelm, of what sort of mood is your sister? Flexible, and, like most of her sex, easily intreated?'

" 'Wherever religion, principle, and reason, sanction her pliancy, she has no resistance;—but, placid, firm, and dignified, no earthly influence can bend her from the right.'

" 'That is excellent!' cried Casimir. 'True, the leading expression of her countenance is a sublime combination of majesty and intelligence. Yet say, Marchfeldt, setting all fraternal preju-

dice aside, has not the painter flattered?'

"'I would I could appeal from your doubts to the original, Vallensteïn.'

"And after much like conversation we returned, at length, to our quarters. But my story should draw towards its close. As for the military part of my adventures, suffice it to say, that I have brought home my spurs untarnished. One battle in detail is like another, and the specimen I have given you, no doubt, appeases your desire for information on that head. By degrees, the feebleness of my frame rendered the performance of my duty, trifling as it was made by tenderness and indulgences, irksome, and at times almost impossible. I have believed, occasionally, that I should expire of fatigue, but I said nothing; and perhaps only the watchful eye of my chosen brother, aided by his faithful ally, the trusty Conrade, would have discovered my real state. He communicated his

suspicions to the Duke, who sent Müller to me, and his sentence was decisive. I thankfully accepted my general's permission to return to my family. My little arrangements were soon made. I left Mirza with Casimir. That incomparable friend followed me a day's journey from the camp. Our parting was not without its pang, for both knew it was final.

"On my route, after the return of Casimir, but one circumstance occurred that deserves record. As we passed, the second evening, through the skirts of a wood, we perceived that we had taken a wrong path; in short, that we were completely bewildered. Jasper and Rudolf beat about in vain; we could not extricate ourselves, and I, fevered and weary, began to think of giving up the attempt, wrapping myself in my pelisse, securing the horses, and passing the night where we were. We had already dismounted and tied our steeds to the trees, and were preparing to collect some

dry sticks, intending to kindle a fire with our flints to keep off the wolves; when one of the men descried a smoke rising from a thicket at some little distance. He approached it cautiously, and returned undiscovered, with the intelligence that a troop of Zingari sate carousing in the hollow; but that, from the deep silence which prevailed amongst them, he suspected they had perceived and meant to surprise us. We now held a consultation. Jasper said, the troop, including women, neither less ferocious nor much less effective than the men, were at least twenty strong; while we mustered only four—soldiers, indeed, and well armed; but yet the odds were formidable. After a short parley, what we had best do in the existing emergency, I determined to hail them, to ask them for a draught of water, of which I stood much in need, and to request their guidance into the path from which we had unluckily deviated. I own I harboured

a strong sense of peril;—my right hand was on the hilt of my sabre, my left grasped a pistol in my belt; while Conrade and his companions, who, in order not immediately to betray our numbers, stood a little in the rear, were perfectly ready to resist, on the instant, any attack which might be attempted. Our party thus arranged, I stood for a moment examining the group. The scene was beautiful; and the wild horde which had taken possession of one of the tangled thickets of this extensive wood greatly augmented the romantic sublimity of the landscape. Their dark, sun-burnt features—their black matted hair, surmounted by the shaggy Moldavian cap—their barbarous and ragged vesture—the mysterious sinister expression of their aspects, exhibiting a strange mixture of cunning and ferocity—the squalid appearance of the naked children, who sate squatted on the ground, with each a finger on their lip, in token, doubtless,

of obedience to the silence they had been enjoined—the gigantic oak, under whose antique and widely spreading arms they had pitched their rude tent—the ruddy blaze of a large fire, over which a kettle hung suspended, and which threw its broad red glare over the group;—all contributed to render it a scene worthy the pencil of Salvator. Pushing aside the branches which concealed me, I placed myself directly in their view. Instinctively, as it were, some of the men grasped each a huge *couteau*, which lay on the ground beside them; but, on a signal made by one who appeared their chief, they laid them down again, and resumed their position. No one spoke, but the wild black eye of the chief inquired my business.

"'Friends,' said I, 'I am a stranger, travelling by chance through this wood; my party and I are unluckily entangled in its intricacies:—give me a guide, and you shall not repent your courtesy. In

the mean time, have the charity to bestow on me a draught of water, for I am choking with thirst.'

"The chief made a sign to one of the women, if, indeed, the hag in question merits such an appellation: she entered the tent, and brought thence a huge leathern bottle: I put it to my mouth, and drank eagerly, but instead of water it was wine of no bad flavour.

"'It is better for you,' said she, now for the first time breaking the silence of this mute party; 'you are hot, and water would chill you.'

"The accent in which this was spoken made me regard the good-natured hag with astonishment: it was the deep rough tone of a man; and as I looked upon her, greatly did the ferocity of her features belie the humanity of her act: her eyes were black, like the rest, but had a red flush around them, which added to their fierceness; the upper part of the face was of a livid, muddy white,

unlike the deep olive of her companions; her chin and upper lip was rendered darker than theirs, by what appeared to me a thick sable beard; and as she spoke or grinned, the long yellow tusks, with which her mouth was sparely adorned, were disclosed; her head was wrapt in a red shawl, which ill concealed the grizzled raven locks which strayed from beneath it: she was tall and of gaunt limbs, and seemed a creature of immense corporeal power.

"'Now,' said she, 'I will be your guide. But your men, no doubt, would fain taste of the bottle.—Here, Conrade! Jasper! Rudolf! What do ye fear?'

"The men, beholding the courtesy of my reception, and consequently relaxing in their caution, had meanwhile advanced; but never shall I forget their fearful consternation, as they heard their names thus familiarly called over; nor, I must confess, was mine much inferior to theirs. None of them, however,

deemed it expedient to reject the offered draught. It seemed to me imprudent to exhibit my purse to the view of this formidable horde, yet I could not resolve to make a thankless return to their hospitality, nor ungenerously persist in mistrusting beings who treated us so kindly. Besides, it would appear that the sybil who held the clue to our labyrinth needed no information from us respecting our actual circumstances. The Zingari, besides the wine, supplied us with eggs and bread, and not one of our little party but felt his wasting strength and courage much revived. I approached the chief, and, with affected confidence, took some dollars from my purse, and presented them with thanks: he immediately sprang from his seat and made me a lowly salutation, touching my foot with his forehead; and then we followed our wild mysterious guide from the thicket. It was some time ere we gained a beaten path; but she who led us broke

or divided the entangled branches which opposed our passage with her long brawny arms, triumphing with apparent ease over each impediment: at length we reached a brake which seemed impenetrable. Our guide then turned, and calling Conrade by name, bade him lend his sabre.

"'No,' said Conrade, 'that I won't! I am not such a fool! You can break away the brushwood well enough with those iron arms of yours. Not but I am willing to lend a hand in cutting it down; but you don't get my sabre in your clutches!'

"The gipsey grinned hideously, having made the request, I suspect, merely for the purpose of diverting herself with Conrade's misgivings. The sabres of my men, and the natural strength of our guide, soon surmounted this obstacle, and the sun had still half an hour of his daily journey to perform when we stood on the verge of the wood, and within two leagues distance of the post-house,

where we meant to rest for the night. I now bade good even to our conductress, and presented her with the reward I thought fairly earned by the assistance she had afforded us.

" 'Well, my lord,' said she, 'you are a generous nobleman; and having led you thus far faithfully, I would fain give you a clue to the future. Let me look upon your palm.'

" 'Alas, friend!' replied I, smiling, 'I believe I can read to the end of life's page without aid of thine: what remains is brief and simple.'

" 'True!' she replied: 'your sun touches the western horizon: it is most true! There stands your emblem!' and she pointed to a young mulberry-tree withered from the summit to the root by a stroke of lightning. 'Look at it, my lord; it has neither pith, nor sap, nor verdure! The cheering rays of the sun, and the nourishing, refreshing dews of evening visit it, as they visit its neigh-

bours; but their visit is vain mockery—it nor feels nor recks them! I saw it not long since, when it was green, gay, and vigorous; the sap swelled its young veins, and its spreading branches were thick with foliage. One thunder-stroke has done this to it! It shall fall to-morrow! Such dry and shrivelled wood suits us for firing.'

"'Your emblem is apt, friend,' said I; 'but we must part, for I would fain be riding towards Wertzlau.'

"'Yet,' said she, still detaining me, 'though *your* thread be well nigh spun, is there no point on which you are curious? It may be you mistrust my knowledge: if so, God speed you, noble colonel! Yet, lest you should forget the Zingari of the wood of Mornau, I tell you this in your ear,—your lamb is marked by a wolf! Ay,' added she with a horrible laugh, 'let her escape if she can!'

"Having uttered these words, she

entered the wood, and was soon lost to our view. Her parting sentence rung like a knell in mine ear. 'Your lamb is marked by a wolf!' Too well did I unravel the sinister and ambiguous import of this mysterious warning, which has left its eternal echo in my heart!"

"My Wilhelm! My dearest brother! Let me beseech you to drive these harassing misgivings from your mind! They are mere hectic imaginations of a sick fancy, believe me, brother."

"Fain, fain, Louisa, would I believe it! But did not even the healthful, gay, and candid Casimir, did not he partake in my forebodings? and he knew the man! Louisa, strange as you may deem it, it is nevertheless true. Two men who never beheld you, whom you have never beheld, are each ardently bent on obtaining you,—the one a godlike creature, the other a fiend. Will you trust me, my sister? Will you choose between them

now? Give me your promise to become the bride of Vallensteïn within three months after my death. Do, Louisa! One breath of yours may lay the misgivings you so much deplore at rest for ever."

Cruelly agitated, Louisa could no longer support her conflicting emotions, and burst into tears. For the appeal now so earnestly pressed by Wilhelm she was in some degree prepared.

"My beloved Wilhelm, I will not dissemble with you: my friendship, my gratitude, my sisterly regard are due to Casimir Vallensteïn; but compel me not, I conjure you, to betroth myself to one whose face I have not seen—whose voice I have not heard. But, Wilhelm, there is yet a mode by which I can appease your apprehensions. I will engage myself by a solemn vow, never to become the wife of Wolfsteïn. Say, Wilhelm, will that content you?"

"No, no," said he, despondingly, "it is no matter! I will have no vows! What are they against the decrees of destiny?"

They now descended from the rampart, for the shadows of evening were falling thick around. The young Baron was fatigued by his narration, and harassed by the tormenting sensations which the name of Wolfstein, whenever he repeated it, stirred up within him; and for Louisa, with the profound and piercing grief wherewith she contemplated the failing, hopeless state of her only brother, were now mingled a new and perplexing train of thoughts. He who had produced so strange and inauspicious an effect on the mind of Wilhelm, haunted her fancy marvellously; his threats respecting her were productive rather of curiosity than terror, and nothing could be more vague and indefinable than the manner in which his idea influenced her imagination.

Meanwhile the good old Felix had been busied, first, in collecting his infallible simples, and then, shut up in his laboratory, extracting their virtues; and he had already prepared an incomparable elixir, which his patient swallowed with grateful docility.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Say, is there yet a pang more sharp than theirs,
Who watch their human treasure as it wears,
And see 'the dust they dote on' melt away
In swift, retrieveless, visible decay?"

For a few days succeeding that on which Baron Marchfeldt had given his sister the brief sketch of his camp adventures, and, in some sort, disburthened his bosom of those anxieties which had so heavily pressed upon it, a pensive cheerfulness took place of his deep melancholy, only interrupted by occasional flashes of hectic animation: still the duties which remained for him to fulfil were executed with calm perseverance. A notary was summoned from Vienna to assist in transacting that, which is every man's last business on earth—the surrender of his earthly possessions. This

being done, he sent for his sister, and presenting her with a sealed packet of papers,

"Take these, Louisa!" said he: "Lock them for the present in your cabinet. In your twentieth year, you are gifted with a matureness of mind, a rectitude of judgment, a firmness of purpose, such as few are so happy as to extract from the experience of a long life.—Solely, then, to the purity and dignity of your own will, and to the guardianship of Heaven, do I consign you!

"You shall never reproach the memory of your brother, that he has shackled and perplexed you with conditions. You will find yourself free,—and may your guardian angel lead you to happiness! One thing, my sister, I would say to you, in the presence of our good father, not as my will, but as my wish. I am desirous, that no more than three months should elapse, after you shall have received the investiture of the barony, ere you shall

perform your due homage to the Emperor. I have procured that in the mean time you shall not be disturbed, and that you shall receive your patents without suffering the embarrassments of public ceremony. Warned by my own fate, I would not allow you leisure to nurse sorrow in your bosom till it becomes too strong for you. Father Felix sanctions my desire, and will accompany you to Vienna."

Father Felix mournfully smiled his assent.

"Now," said Wilhelm gaily, "I have time to be idle, and I am glad of it."

"I was thinking, my brother," said Louisa, "that we would not re-ascend the tower stairs till you are stronger—they are too steep for you, and I have been devising what amusement would least fatigue you.—What say you to a sail on the river?"

"It is a happy thought! You shall take your lute, Louisa—It is a heavenly evening!"

The Friar looked disturbed and unhappy as he listened to the arrangement, and even made an effort to meet the glance of Louisa's eye; but she having obtained her brother's assent to her proposal, went to give orders for preparation. Felix would have followed her instantly, but Wilhelm with a pallid smile laid his hand on his arm—

"Be satisfied, my kind father," said he: "I see you remember it! But I am bent on a sail this evening—my mind is unperturbed, and you have nothing to fear—I thought to have proposed it, and when Louisa did, it seemed as though it was to be!"

"Ah!" thought the Friar, "what an admirable cordial is my elixir! Would he he had taken it earlier! But, with the blessing of the Holy Virgin, it may not even yet be too late!"

The water was smooth and tranquil, and the sky warm and benign: a blessed calm seemed to reign universally as the

little boat skimmed along the river, with scarcely breeze sufficient to fill its silken sail, and a couple of oars were deemed necessary to accelerate its motion. Wilhelm, reclined under an awning, lay silently listening to their measured stroke, to the cheerful hum from the villages and hamlets, which studded the shore, or the songs and laughter wafted from a distant fishing-boat. Wilhelm at length breaking the pensive silence which prevailed, said,

"Louisa, do we stop this evening at the Isle of Willows? Let us land our refreshments there."

At the mention of the Isle of Willows Louisa turned pale: it instantly darted on her memory that it was that evening, the 4th of August, three years ago, that the Lady Blanche de Fribourg, in all the bloom and vivacity of health, youth, innocence, and happiness, listening to many a fond project of future bliss, had sailed along that stream; and the Wil-

helm, now so wan, so wasted, was then blithe, active, vigorous, blessed in the present, confident in the future. They had that evening disembarked on the little picturesque Isle of Willows: it was a favourite haunt with Blanche—there they spent an hour of pure and genuine enjoyment, such an one as it was destined they should never repeat. As they sailed homewards, Blanche complained of shiverings, and in a week from that evening her innocent happy spirit had fled from earth. Lord Marchfeldt perceived his sister's changing colour—"Be not troubled, my Louisa!—It is the 4th of August—I know it," said he calmly, "but indulge me. Let us land this evening on the Isle of Willows: I heard a song three years ago, which I would hear once more, and therefore I bade you bring your lute."

The little bark bore them to the well known spot: there for some time they rested, and there Louisa, at her brother's bidding, sang the song of Blanche, but it

was her utmost, and when over, she threw herself on his neck, exclaiming,

"Oh, Wilhelm! this is hard proving! I pray you try me no farther!"

He pressed her tenderly to his bosom, saying, "Forgive me, my sister! It is the last!"

That night, when the inhabitants of the castle were wrapt in slumber, all, save those whose pillows were rendered restless by anxiety, a cry of distress was heard, which summoned many a sleeper from his couch. Conrade, who slept in an apartment adjoining that of the Baron, heard himself feebly called: he flew to his master, who articulated, with difficulty, the name of Father Felix, when a slight convulsion seized him. Conrade was distracted; he knew not how to quit him, yet anxious to obtain both spiritual and temporal aid, he rushed to the door of the apartment, and cried in piercing accents on Father Felix, whose chamber was in the same gallery. The good priest

was accustomed to hold, at all times, long and severe vigils, and more of each night was devoted by him to prayer and meditation than to repose—now, when his gentle, pious mind was oppressed by sore affliction, he sought with even increased diligence the consolations of religion:—happily, he had not on that night, as often was his wont, pursued his devotions in the chapel, and the appalling sound of Conrade's cry instantly reached his ear. Its mournful meaning went straight to his heart; he was presently by the side of his beloved pupil, whom the convulsion, although past, had left in a state of speechless exhaustion, but he pressed the hand of Felix, and lifted his eyes in pious adoration to the crucifix which the good Father presented to him: his spirit mingled fervently in the prayer which his afflicted Confessor, kneeling by his side, offered up for its easy and happy transition from the mortal frame, and having, as it were, waited for its passport, fled for ever.

The time had been short and intensely occupied, from the moment that Conrade perceived his master's situation to that which concluded the final struggle; and not till all was over, did Felix recollect the existence of any other being than that of his once bright hope, his darling Wilhelm.

"Ah!" said he, groaning internally, "the worst is yet!"

And carefully closing the door, he slowly pursued his way towards the wing of the castle that contained the apartments of Lady Louisa and her women. As he went, the deep, dull, lugubrious sound of the muffled bell smote his ear, and he started with a beating heart, as though some unwelcome intelligence suddenly reached him. The castle, whose inhabitants the dismal warning of their lord's passing bell had fearfully aroused, was all tumult: Father Felix met the Lady Louisa at the door of her apartment, aghast, dishevelled, speechless. With

gentle force he would have led her back, but she would not be resisted; the just and natural grief, till now so forcibly and painfully pent within her bosom, broke its restraint; she bathed the cold and precious remains of her lost Wilhelm in the waters of affliction, and Felix had little heart to chide emotions, which, internally, he so deeply partook.

Sad and solemn was the week which followed the decease of Wilhelm, Baron of Marchfeldt. The standards and banners of his noble house floated on the castle towers, surmounted by the sable death-flag. In the centre of the great hall, which was hung and carpeted with black, under a canopy crowned with waving plumes, on a magnificent bier, lay the pale corse of the late master of the castle and all its wide domains. Perfumed tapers burned day and night before it; the hall was lined with mute mourners, muffled in their long funereal cloaks; and from time to time the fathers

of a neighbouring monastery came, in long and solemn procession, to sing their masses for the repose of the dead, and to sprinkle the bier with holy water.

On the anniversary of the day on which three years before, the lifeless, yet lovely remains of Blanche de Fribourg were deposited in the vault of the chapel of Marchfeldt, were those of Baron Wilhelm conveyed with suitable ceremonies to the same spot. That night, from the time the requiem ceased, Felix passed alone in the cemetery. Not a single thought in the pure heart of his lamented pupil had been unexplored by the eye of the venerable Confessor, who knew that too passionate an attachment for one human creature was the only spot that stained the white page; and he hoped, that as perfection dwells not in man, that spot would be visited as an infirmity, not as a crime; nay, while he prayed and wept, he became suddenly assured that it was so; and, habitually convinced that

every dispensation of Heaven is good, he breathed an internal vow that no tear of bitterness should again descend from his eyes for the fate of one who had concluded a pilgrimage of sorrow, in a blessed resting-place.

Many of the noble friends and relatives of the house of Marchfeldt had shown their respect to the memory of the late Baron by repairing to the castle, to assist in the last sad homage which can be rendered to earthly honour; but when these mournful rites were duly performed, and dust to dust was restored—when the last vibration of the requiem had ceased in the aisle of the chapel, the guests all withdrew, leaving their adieus and condolences for the Baroness, who quitted not her apartment. Her uncle, Ernest of Erdenheim, alone remained as her representative in the transaction of some necessary business, as the despatch of couriers to Vienna to apprise the Emperor of the late event, and the receiving, with all

due formality, the nobleman entrusted by Ferdinand to convey the patent investing Louisa of Marchfeldt with her deceased brother's titles, estates, and privileges. This done, the Lord of Erdenheïm likewise took his leave, and returned to Vienna. Once only, in compliance with indispensable custom, had Lady Louisa appeared to any eyes save those of her spiritual father, and her favourite woman, since the death of Wilhelm; but it was necessary she should be present at the reading of the will, and sanction the fulfilment of such of the injunctions it contained as required immediate execution. Her uncle seized the opportunity to whisper a few soothing and parental words in her ear, assuring her that in all emergencies, his advice and protection were at her command.

For many weeks the black banner continued to wave over the towers of Marchfeldt, and the great hall retained its dismal trappings; a month elapsed ere the young

Baroness found courage even to seek the refreshing breeze on the castle ramparts.

In the mean time, Father Felix was busily engaged in executing a project she had entrusted to his care;—she had resolved to build and endow a hermitage and small chapel on the Isle of Willows, to maintain two friars, who should perform two masses daily for the repose of the souls of Wilhelm, Baron of Marchfeldt and the Lady Blanche of Fribourg. The good Felix could not have been employed at this season in a function better adapted to his inclination:—the Bishop of Raab had promised to bless the ground, and the castle labourers had already cleared a sufficient space for the erection of the buildings: two holy men, distinguished for the simplicity and piety of their lives, had offered, with the consent of their abbot, to quit the monastery of Saint Guthred for the hermitage. On the day appointed for the consecration of the ground, the Baroness, dressed in the

deepest mourning, and closely veiled, attended by her maidens all in sable vestments, was handed by the Bishop of Raab into her state barge: the train of the reverend prelate, and the seneschal, steward, and other chief domestics of the castle, followed in a long procession of boats. It was night, and the mournful pageant moved by torch-light along the waters of the Raab so silently, that not a sound was heard, save the regular dip of the oar; for all the sails were furled.

Arrived at the Isle of Willows, the Abbot of Saint Guthred and his holy train, accompanied by Father Felix, met them at the landing-place, chanting in deep chorus their solemn dirge.—No word was spoken—nothing occurred which could in aught disturb the mournful dignity of the scene: the bishop having, with all meet ceremonial, consecrated the site of the chapel, which was to be annexed as a cell to the monastery of Saint Guthred, the Baroness laid with her fair hand, and

sprinkled with her tears, the first stone of a building thus dedicated to the eternal repose of a much loved brother, and having by that act concluded the office of the day, by the glare of the torches the same silent procession again glided along the river, and again entered the castle gate. The bishop remained that night at Marchfeldt; but the impressive rite to which the day had been devoted defeated the intention of its mistress, who had meditated doing due honour to her holy guest by presiding at supper, in return for his courteous and gentle acquiescence in her wishes; but this could not be: on entering the great hall, she knelt in silence, and received his benediction.

"Now, my daughter," said the good man, "it is enough! Go to your chamber; your agitated heart requires repose and seclusion—your venerable confessor will take the charge of my entertainment. I must early to horse to-morrow.—So good night, and *benedicite*, dear lady."

CHAPTER IX.

"I found it in my chamber, where he dropped it,
For an especial purpose, that wrought to his
desire."

OTHELLO.

THE heart of Louisa Marchfeldt was deeply and sorely impressed by the untimely fate of her dear and only brother; but, while bending in sorrow over his tomb, a warning voice seemed to issue thence, reminding her, that it was the indulgence of unchecked grief which laid him there whom she mourned.

"Ah!" said she, "in my gentle Wilhelm it was infirmity—in me it would be rebellion. My temper was ever firmer than his, my will had ever more of force in it. He, alas! has fallen beneath the first stroke. I am fitted, perhaps destined, for much endurance. Wilhelm!

Blanche!—Innocent spirits! This world was no home for you."

It was some time ere the Baroness even made an effort to combat her affliction: she knew that nature would resent an attempt to defraud her of her just tribute, and she paid it without scruple; she gave way to her sorrow, but did not nourish it; and she hailed and encouraged the first dawnings of returning serenity. The Marchfeldters, who had, ever since the death of Lady Blanche, been accustomed to depend on Louisa as their protectress and friend, heaved a brief sigh to the memory of their young baron, and saw themselves transferred beneath the mild rule of his sister with but little regret. Father Felix soon taught himself to think of the lovely pair who were gone as inhabitants of Heaven, and his spirit held frequent communings with theirs: they mingled themselves in his prayers, they were with him in his solitary walks:—above all,

when the solemn choir uplifted their voices in deep swelling anthems of praise, Felix could ever distinguish certain heavenly accents among the earthly ones. If it was illusion, it was innocent; and never could what we call reality possess a more powerful, never half so sweet and sacred, an influence, as these visionary imaginings. Autumn was advancing, and the changing livery of the woods, the gray tint of the mornings, the hollow whistling of the winds through the yellow foliage, hinted the decline of the year. Every morning the Baroness, sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, visited the neighbouring hamlets and villages, conferred with her tenants, and discovered, in all her measures for their advantage, an acuteness and maturity of judgment far above her years. She felt that the period was at hand when, for the first time, she must take leave, for a season, of her faithful vassals; and she was eager to leave nothing un-

done which might be better done in her presence. The Isle of Willows was her frequent resort;—her heart was set on assisting at the first mass which should be sung in the chapel before she quitted Marchfeldt; and she was earnest in stimulating the workmen to industry by rewards and encouragement. It happened one day that she had visited this favoured spot, having, with Father Felix, sailed thither from the castle; and, having lingered there some time, she proposed to the Father that they should be landed on the opposite shore, and walk home along the bank of the river, after having visited the sick wife of one of the villagers. As they tapped at the door, the latch was lifted by a stranger; and Louisa started involuntarily and crossed herself, for the appearance of this stranger struck her forcibly as answering exactly the description her brother had given of the evil-boding hag in the wood of Mornau. The recognition was at-

tended with a slight sensation of faintness, and she turned pale: she perceived, with increased consternation, that the hideous being noticed her emotion with a malicious smile, and she beheld those long, yellow, scattered fangs, which completed the portrait, and convinced her that the gipsey who led her brother through the tangled brakes of the wood of Mornau now stood before her. The sybil muttered a few words, which rendered any farther demonstration needless,—

"The tree *is* fallen then!"

Louisa's presence of mind now returned, and she approached the bed of the sick woman, which occupied a corner of the apartment: having asked her in a whisper the necessary questions respecting her state, and heard her petitions for various little comforts, she said,

"Alice, who is that woman—and when did she come to you?"

"A woman is it, madam? I thought

verily it had been a man from the voice! Why she came in ten minutes ago. Some one knocked at the door; so thinking it was Urban, the miller's boy, I cried 'Come in.' Then I heard a hoarse tone ask leave to rest a little while, so I bade them rest and welcome, and said Stephen would be home anon, and then there would be food as well as rest.

When the Baroness and the Friar entered, two little ruddy faced children came creeping from behind their mother's bed, where they had nestled themselves from fear of the gipsey woman, now perfectly assured of safety, since the Baroness and her reverend almoner were everywhere regarded as visible guardian angels. Father Felix was sitting in his usual meditative posture, and the gipsey stood close at his elbow, supporting her tall gaunt form on a long staff; and, as Louisa turned from the bed, Stephen entered, and began to pour forth his unpolished, but grateful homage; at the

same time eyeing his mysterious guest with a sort of fearful curiosity, of which respect and courtesy for the Lady of Marchfeldt forbade him to seek the gratification. Alice meanwhile called to her husband—" Stephen, there is a good woman resting herself; she is famished too, I warrant, as well as tired; let her eat with you and the boys."

" It is needless," said the gipsey, stretching herself up from her staff: " I did not want your bread;—what I wanted I have found."

And, without farther ceremony, she lifted the latch, and strode away. Stephen's astonishment now broke forth:—

" If it be a woman," exclaimed he, " I never saw such a one before! To be sure, some of these Zingari are enough to frighten the wicked one himself, but she who is just gone might laugh at any I have seen! I am glad she *is* gone, however."

" My good Stephen," said the Ba-

roness, " I am not apt to take alarm, but there is a malignant expression in the countenance of that gipsey which has startled me. Father Felix and I will wait while you give little Wilfred and Leonard their dinner. You shall attend us home, and have yours at the castle, and you can carry back a little basket of medicines and cordials for Alice."

One of the boys ran to summon a neighbour to bring her distaff, to sit by the sick woman; and the Baroness, the Friar, and their attendant, pursued their way unmolested to the castle—the weird woman appeared no more.

It may be easily conceived that Louisa was unpleasantly haunted by her hideous image; and the associations her sudden appearance and exclamation—" The tree *is* fallen!" failed not to conjure up—all combined to awaken sensations of a saddening and dejecting nature. The season too—the hollow swell of the evening wind—the murmur of the Raab—and

the pale smile of the setting sun—all united to impress a mind already enfeebled by recent or, indeed, present sorrow.

"My father," said she, "we will pass this evening on the battlements: it cheers me to look down upon the villages, to see the smoke ascending from their chimnies, and to catch the distant hum of their songs. Besides, I want to explain to you why I was so unusually appalled at the sight of the strange woman in Stephen's cottage; and to relate to you a circumstance with which she is connected."

The good Felix, as has been already observed, was apt to be absorbed in the contemplation of things not seen, and, consequently, was not very quick-sighted to things visible. He had, it is true, heard Wilhelm's story piece-meal, in the course of his several confessions; but, following the usual bent of his nature, he had given his heed rather to that

which was mental in it, than to that which was actual; and had dwelt more on the thoughts of his pupil's heart, than on the facts which had happened to him personally: when, however, the young Baroness recalled to his recollection the anecdote of the Zingari, and the ominous emblem of the mulberry-tree, he confessed their meeting with this extraordinary woman, her smile of malicious triumph, and her exclamation, had an appearance of sinister coincidence. The discussion of these matters led, as is ever the case, from link to link through a long chain of interesting discourse, when some one interrupted the conference by summoning the Friar to attend a stranger below. Kind and accessible to the wants and distresses of all around, few hours in the day elapsed in which some application for aid, spiritual or temporal, for advice or relief, did not reach him:—it was his vocation, and he faithfully obeyed it As he turned to descend the stairs

which led from the rampart, something dropped from his sleeve; and Barbara, Lady Louisa's favourite woman, who entered at the moment, picked it up.

"Ah!" cried she, "what may this be? This case must contain a miniature picture. The saints preserve us! Sure the holy man does not wear the picture of a lady in his bosom!"

And, touching a spring, it flew open; when the loud exclamation she uttered attracted the attention of the Baroness.

"What a beautiful youth!—My lady, have you ever seen this picture?—Who can it be?"

"What hast thou got there?—let me see it;" said Louisa languidly.

"I cannot imagine," cried Barbara, presenting it, "who it can be! As Father Felix went out, it tumbled from his bosom or his sleeve. I should never have thought of his wearing such a thing about him. And do look, my lady, what a brilliant setting!—such lovely dia-

monds! Well, this is pretty curious, however. For my part, I never saw Father Felix wear any thing worth picking off the ground before; even his *tabatière* is made of a bit of walnut-tree. As for that beautiful rosary of wrought gold that Lord Wilhelm, rest his soul! gave him, he was never easy till he presented it the Virgin, and got a string of common porcelain beads instead of it."

Meanwhile, not to the diamonds which surrounded the ivory, but to the features thereon portrayed, were the eyes of Louisa riveted in silent astonishment:—vague and uneasy ideas crowded to her mind as she gazed; and, as she echoed Barbara's exclamation, "Whose resemblance can this be?" something within her own breast seemed to answer the question. But whence came it?—By what accident did the Friar obtain possession of it?—And what induced him to preserve and wear it about him? All

these perplexing queries at once assailed her, and it was in vain her ideas explored the regions of probability for suitable replies. "Oh! that Vallensteïn resembled this!" rose on a sigh from her bosom; but the garb was not that of a military man. Her brother had never described to her the person or features of the younger Vallensteïn; but he had repeatedly, and in the most lively colours, depicted the countenance of one, whom of all men living, she ought to shun; and she shuddered as she felt an internal consciousness that this man's portrait was now in her hand, placed there by so singular, so inevitable an accident. When Barbara had a little exhausted her admiration of the diamonds, she transferred it to the picture.

"What a white forehead! And how those glossy waves of ebony hair set it off! What eyes! The cheeks, in truth, are somewhat sallow; but, after all, that

becomes a man. But the mouth—the mouth is perfection! What would I not give to see it smile!"

"Why, Barbara," said the Baroness, "it seems already to have injured your wits,—the smile might be fatal."

And, as she uttered the words, the manner in which Wilhelm had described the smile of those lips came uneasily to her mind.

"It is time, however, we should restore Father Felix his property;—he will perhaps reveal to us the original of this picture."

"Why, my lady, it is not fit for an old friar to carry such a thing about him! I dare say your ladyship is quite welcome to it. I am sure, if he takes it again, I shall make up my mind that he is growing childish all on the sudden; but I'll lay a dollar that I have found out the meaning of this picture;—perhaps the cunning old soul dropped it on purpose. Depend upon it, my lady, it is

the picture of your cousin, the young Lord of Erdenheïm. Your uncle gave it Father Felix, I doubt not, when he was here, to show you at the proper time. Ay, ay, my lady, the whole story is out!—The barony of Marchfeldt, and its forests, and woods, and river, and mills, and villages, are worth looking after. But I hope your ladyship, who can have whom you please by a single beck of your hand, won't have a husband palmed on you in this way."

"Silence! dear Barbara. You craze me with your nonsense!—You do my uncle of Erdenheïm great injustice in attributing to him such indelicacy. Besides, though it is near five years since I saw my cousin, I remember that his hair was red, and that he was very plain, while this is—in short, there is not the slightest resemblance!"

"Yes, but men alter so much," said the pertinacious Barbara; who, satisfied with the sagacity of her suggestion,

never waited to reflect whether the natural history of the human race afforded many examples of the transformation of red hair into black.

They descended the turret stairs, and the Baroness desired Father Felix might be informed she wished to see him.

"The holy father has mounted his mule, madam," said the servant, "and is gone to shrive a dying man some miles off: he ordered me to tell your ladyship, that as he will not quit the sick man till he is released—it may be day-break ere he returns to the castle; and he will call at the gate of St. Guthred's, and request Brother Justin to perform vespers and matins in the chapel."

"It is well!" said the baroness: she believed herself, however, disappointed in being thus kept in suspense as to the original of the picture. The oftener, the longer she examined it, the more she was convinced that it was Wolfsteïn; and the more strenuously she endeavoured to per-

suade herself that it was *not* Wolfstein, her mind was a prey to the most strange and contradictory feelings. Had Conrade been at hand, her perplexity might at once have been ended, but Conrade, whose heart was half broken by the loss of his master, had received permission to go for change of scene to the house of a relation near Vienna: he was to superintend the exertions of the workmen, who were preparing the Hôtel de Marchfeldt for the reception of the Baroness;—it had been unoccupied since the death of Baron Ulric, so that great repairs and much modern decoration were become requisite.

"It is a pity Conrade is absent!" said the Baroness, while perhaps she felt relieved that the miniature would still remain some hours in her possession, while she was ignorant of the true original. There was something not clearly explained in the countenance of the miniature,—something that required repeated

examination, but which, when repeatedly examined, left the gazer still uncertain.

"Alas!" said Louisa to herself, "I have no key to this mystery! What does this beautiful face tell? It tells of genius and power; but, for the rest, it is only from the unclosing of those lips that I must expect the revelation!"

Wild, restless, uneasy visions distracted the slumbers of that night, and when in the morning Father Felix returned from the performance of his pious office, the Baroness, perturbed and anxious, desired immediately to see him; hastily offering the salutations of the morning—

"My father," said she, "who is the original of this picture?"

"I know not, my child," returned he, looking carelessly on it: "he is probably unknown to me, for that face, once seen, would not be forgotten."

"But, dear father, what then induces you to wear the resemblance of an unknown individual?"

"I wear it, my child! I wear it not! This," said he, taking an unadorned Agnus from his bosom, "this I have worn for many years; but it has had no companion. Daughter!" added he, mildly, "my business during the past night has been of a serious nature, unfitting me to solve the riddles you have prepared for my return,—I must leave you, to seek an hour's repose,—and then to the chapel!"

"Yet, tarry one moment, dear father! This miniature, when you were last evening suddenly summoned from the rampart, dropped from your bosom or your sleeve. Is it not therefore natural I should suppose you could inform me respecting the original?"

"That is indeed strange! Believe me, daughter, I now behold that portrait for the first time: the original, I am confident, I never saw.—But," said he, pausing for an instant, "the mystery is not difficult to solve; it is, doubtless, our blessed Wilhelm's brother in arms,

the worthy son of the illustrious Duke of Friedland!"

"Indeed! Is it indeed, father? And is this in truth the resemblance of Count Vallensteïn?"

"I know not, daughter, but we may conjecture it. Your brother must have brought it hither, and lost it: he was not likely to bear about him any portrait but that of his friend, and by what other means can we account for its being found in this castle? To my belief, there exists not a doubt that those are the features of the young Count Vallensteïn!"

How very easily do we admit their testimony, and adopt their creed, who, even by the most palpable mistake, flatter our self-illusions!

"It is indubitable, father," cried Louisa. "How could I be so dull to hesitate for a moment on a fact so obvious? No one but our beloved Wilhelm *could* have brought it hither, and assuredly he would wear no picture but that of his friend.

This, too, accounts for his never having described Casimir: unquestionably he intended to let this speak for him! How could I be so blind?"

The good father was content; he harboured not a shadow of suspicion that the features before him belonged to any other than the younger Vallenstein. He was well acquainted with his lamented pupil's earnest desire that his friend and sister should one day be united, and it gladdened his gentle spirit to perceive that Louisa did not look upon the picture with indifference. He was one of those simple straight-minded men who see right before them, adopting ideas in their singleness, and according as they first present themselves, but seldom examining their different sides, or suffering the perplexing contest of opposite conjectures to occupy the peaceful arena of his mind. He was no sophist, no analyst. That which appeared true, to him *was* true—he looked no farther: it was therefore

well he had but little to do in temporal matters; for verily the wisdom of this world abided not in him.

Convinced that the portrait in the hand of the Baroness was actually that of the man with whom he hoped one day to join that hand, the features seemed to him pregnant with excellent meaning: the calm on the countenance, which was of a nature to puzzle the most skilful physiognomist, puzzled not Father Felix: it was the holy tranquillity of religious fortitude, since that was one of the Christian virtues which poor Felix had learned highly to appreciate. That the eyes bespoke a brilliant intellect no one could doubt.

"And the mouth, dear father! What think you of that?"

"Ah!" said Father Felix, having mused over it for a moment, precisely in the words used the evening before by Barbara, "I would we could see it smile!"

He now again bade his pupil adieu, desirous to take some rest.

"But, father, it is, after all, your property, since, by some chance or other, it certainly dropped from your sleeve."

"If it be my property, daughter, I transfer it unto thee, and I hope one day to make the original thine also."

Louisa blushed, yet did not reprove the wish :—howbeit, her spirit was not so tranquil on the subject of the picture as was that of Father Felix : a small still voice kept disturbing her with hints and whispers ;—in vain she smothered it,—it would be heard, though she made as though she did not hear it !

CHAPTER X.

"Think'st thou there are no serpents in the world
But those who slide along the grassy sod,
And sting the luckless foot that presses them?"

Joanna Baillie.

The portrait, which had thus mysteriously made its appearance at Marchfeldt castle, had produced, unconscious agent as it was, a marvellous effect on the most important individuals of the family: the baroness was thoughtful, abstracted, and agitated; every leaf that was blown across the casement had power to startle her.—She pursued her daily avocations, her visits to the hamlets, and to the Isle of Willows, with undiminished perseverance, for nothing was neglected; but she fulfilled her duties languidly; her heart and her tongue seemed engaged in different matters, and her directions had some-

what less of precision and distinctness than they were wont to have. Barbara raved incessantly on the beautiful unknown, on his eyes, his forehead, his raven hair, and wondered daily when he would follow his picture. The good Friar was indebted to the same source for more of cheerfulness than he had felt since the death of Wilhelm: he had one wish left on earth, and only one, and this auspicious picture was the presage of its fulfilment.

"Let me once see my sweet child united to the friend of her brother, and then my humble task below will close blessedly!"

The new inhabitant of Louisa's bosom was not peaceful; her temper, fine by nature, rendered almost perfect by principle, now exhibited some slight and unusual touches of petulance and hastiness. That which has never been seen before is sure to create wonder, and the most trifling asperity in the tone of the young

baroness was a phenomenon of magnitude sufficient to excite much consternation. On its first occurrence she partook in the surprise, and wondered what evil influence possessed her; but on finding that what at first might be deemed accidental was repeated, and might become habitual, she was not of a disposition to content herself with coldly wondering at the cause; indeed, a few home questions sincerely answered easily explained it.

"Alas!" said she, "I am at war within myself. With my eyes open, I am lodging an impostor in my thoughts, amongst which he is working confusion and perplexity! I *know* this,—and the result is in my own hands! I have hitherto meanly cheated myself! This is no Vallensteïn! A secret voice ceases not, night nor day, to tell me that it is not!—Whoever it be, its influence is perverse and unhappy. From the hour on which I first beheld it, I have ceased to be myself. From this hour, therefore, lie there!" And she

locked it in a cabinet. With a sincere and vigorous effort she endeavoured to extricate her thoughts from their entanglement; she followed her daily duties with more than usual ardour, and, when within the castle, studied deeply and intensely under the tuition of Friar Felix: in short, so successfully did she work, that the enemy was well nigh conquered, and she enjoyed all the delight of conscious triumph, while the pride she now felt was a tacit confession of the difficulty she had surmounted.

It was near the end of October; the hermitage and its small chapel were almost completed; autumn was closing in gloomily; the winds swept down with great force from the mountains; the waters of the Raab had assumed a red and turbid hue, and swelled and dashed against their banks, and the evenings were sullen and rainy. Late one evening, as the baroness sat alone in her Oriel, deeply engaged in a book for which the good Felix

had bespoke her attention, and listening occasionally to the hoarse chiding of the storm which rattled her windows and raved around the battlements, her meditations were suddenly interrupted by a loud peal of the castle bell, followed by such confused sounds in the great hall as not only surprised, but somewhat alarmed her. The Friar, to the performance of whose duty no storm was an obstacle, had set forth on his mule on some charitable mission, and Louisa was expecting his return; her first dread, therefore, was that some disaster had befallen the holy man, and that he had once too often braved a dark inclement night. She snatched the taper which burnt beside her, and hastened to the corridor which ran round the hall, from whence she could witness what passed below. Just as she reached her station, she saw a litter set down, on which lay a person suffering apparently from some grievous accident: the litter was borne by three

of her own vassals, the fourth bearer, who appeared in great affliction, was a stranger. Father Felix was busily engaged in issuing orders to old Justina the housekeeper, and other domestics, for the accommodation of the wounded man, to whose side was held a handkerchief stained with blood, and from whom no articulate sound proceeded. Perceiving that Providence had thrown some distressed individual on her hospitality, she descended to the hall, when Father Felix related, " that as he had taken shelter from an overwhelming shower of rain under the skirt of a wood, a few furlongs from the village, he heard himself hailed, when a man, apparently half distracted with terror, intreated him, for the love of Heaven, to assist him in carrying his master from that spot; that they had been attacked by a party of robbers, and that in the first surprise, he, with the rest of his lord's suite, had fled, but that almost immediately, yet too late to lend

any effectual assistance, he returned, finding his master, as he conjectured, dead. 'But he has since repeatedly groaned,' said he, 'and the aid of a good Christian may restore him yet.' You may think, my child, I was sorely dismayed; but I felt the poor stranger's pulse, and took heart, for he was in truth better than ten dead men; so I got Stephen, and the miller, and his son, and, with the aid of the servant, we have brought him safe, for I found there was no seating him on the mule. Providence sent that shower of rain, for had I not happened to shelter close to the wood, he might have died there. Now, with the Virgin's blessing, we shall do very well in a day or two, I question not."

"My good fellow," said the Baroness to the servant; "do not so bitterly afflict yourself. You hear the promise of this holy man:—your master will soon be restored."

"Ay truly," said Father Felix, "I

hope so: but ere we pronounce too confidently, we must examine his wounds; so retire, my daughter, and I will bring you speedy intelligence."

On removing the handkerchief, and washing off the blood, which had flowed copiously, a wound of somewhat angry appearance presented itself; but the friar's surgical skill soon convinced him that it had no considerable depth. In ascertaining this point, however, he was obliged to put his patient to some pain, and thereby recalled him to recollection.

"Where am I?" said he, raising himself, and gazing inquiringly about him. "And what are you doing with me?"

"Be patient, sir," said the Friar, "you are in gentle hands, though you have lately been in rude ones; but, praised be the Virgin! you have escaped without mortal injury! I fear that in exploring the depth of your wound I have hurt you; though, believe me, I touched you as tenderly as the case would admit.

You have been sometime insensible, but that is easily accounted for by the effusion of blood!"

"Ah, traitor! deserter!" cried the stranger, when his weeping valet met his eyes, "the sight of thee brings all that has passed to my recollection!"

"Alas, sir!" said the Friar, "His courage forsook him, as he forsook you, in a moment of weakness; but his fault was instantaneous, and grievously repented: had it not been for him, you would have perished in the wood. But you must, for your own sake, lay aside all irritating reflections—be silent and docile, or we shall have fever."

Father Felix then superintended the conveyance of his patient to the chamber provided for him, and having taken care that the poor weeping, shivering domestic was divested of his wet clothes and provided with others, he left the wounded man for a season to his vigilance, while he went to confer with his

young ward on the accident which had so unexpectedly brought a stranger guest under her roof.

"As for the young gentleman," said he, "my mind is at rest concerning him, —he is doing well: but I am woefully grieved to find we have such bad neighbours.—It will be five and forty years, next eve of St. Agatha, since I have known the castle of Marchfeldt, and never before, within my remembrance, has any resembling outrage passed so near it! Sure enough, the world grows worse as it grows older!"

"I fear," replied the Baroness, a horde of Zingari are encamped in the wood. That woman we saw at Stephen's cottage came, peradventure, to reconnoitre the ground; from what she said, it was plain her coming was not accidental:—she discovered, alas! that this domain has no master, and therefore selected it for the scene of crimes and outrages, deeming they may now be committed with im-

punity. But, my father, we must not sleep in such a case as this: it is now late, but there is no time to lose.—Let ten of the stoutest of our men go forth with torches to beat the wood, and I will, whatever may be the result of their search, have sentinels there for some time to come, or the poor villagers will live in constant apprehension."

Highly approving her prompt and decisive measures, and priding no little in the intelligence and judgment she displayed in all emergencies, he went to transmit and enforce her directions; after which he returned to his patient, who, gratefully pressing his hand, assured him his remedies had already produced a salutary effect, that his wound was soothed by the ointment he had applied to it, and that his spirits were composed by the draught he had caused him to swallow. "In short, holy sir," said he, "were it not for my regard to your prohibition, I should assail you with thanks

and questions, to the trial of your patience."

"Since that is the case," replied Felix, "I will bid you farewell for the night."

At the same time he cast an inquiring glance on the countenance of the late disconsolate valet, which was now restored to serenity.

"Yes," said the stranger, interpreting the look, "Rupert is forgiven. He is a good lad: it was the first trial his courage has sustained; he will meet the second better."

In the morning the scouts returned from their investigation of the wood, but without the smallest intelligence concerning either the robbers or the remainder of the stranger's train, though they had found a steed bridled and saddled, which Rupert recognised for his master's. The horse was found drooping at the foot of a tree, and surrendered himself without an effort to escape; that of Rupert had galloped away, on the

rider alighting to succour his master, nor was it now to be found; but an hour after the return of the reconnoitring party it appeared in the village, was caught, and brought to the castle.

A vague idea possessed the Friar's mind, that, either waking or dreaming, he had somewhere or other seen his patient before, and the thought occasioned him to bestow a close scrutiny on his features—to no purpose, however; for, though he was still haunted by the notion, he could by no means find whence it originated. On the morning after the event which brought the stranger to the castle, as the Friar sate by his bed-side congratulating him on his amendment—

" Ah!" exclaimed he, " What do I not owe to your humanity! But pardon me, reverend sir, and deem me not impertinent, if I ask who and where is the lord of this castle? Well am I assured he is absent, or his courtesy would ere this

have impelled him to visit one thrown by such circumstances on his charity."

"Alas, alas!" said the Friar, "this castle has no lord. Near three months have elapsed since the last baron of the noble line of Marchfeldt was laid in kindred dust. I trusted he would have seen my head placed on its last pillow; but who can foretel?—The saints preserve us! What ails you, sir?"

For the stranger, with a hollow groan, had sunk back upon the bed, and fainted. Rupert and the Friar immediately betook themselves to administering cordials and restoratives, the former all the while exclaiming,

"Ay, sir, you have done it! Oh, my poor master! This is worse than the robbers! To think that this is the castle of Marchfeldt—to think that young Lord Wilhelm should be dead! Yes! sure enough this is worse than the robbers! As for a few dollars, or the loss of a

little blood, my master's never the man to value it! But if his friend's gone; that's another matter! Oh, what will become of us!"

In the mean time the unfortunate stranger opened his eyes.

"My father," said he, with a look of piercing anguish, "leave me, leave me, I conjure you, a little while, to collect my thoughts, shocked and confused as they are by this cruel intelligence. I entreat you, sir, leave me: my feelings must have scope. In a few moments I will despatch Rupert to request your return. Yet stay, holy sir; is the sister of Wilhelm—is the Lady Louisa at Marchfeldt?"

"She is, my son."

"Then, sir, grant me one favour: tell her not, as yet, that her brother's bosom friend is beneath her roof—not at least till we have conferred."

Then, waving his hand to hasten Father Felix, the good man withdrew, full

of pleased astonishment, though somewhat apprehensive of the effect so sudden a shock might produce on the recovery of this most welcome guest. There is no acquisition so delightful to a placid, benevolent mind, such as Felix possessed, as that of a new claimant on the affections. The death of Wilhelm could hardly be said to have left a void in his heart, since the place he filled while living was now occupied by his memory. " But now," said Felix, " it has pleased Heaven to send me the sweetest of all consolations, the power to do that, which, if my darling Wilhelm is conscious of what happens on earth, his spirit will bless me for."

And he clasped his hands in fervent thankfulness; yet, so eager was he to discharge his mind of this felicitous intelligence, that he was not a little troubled at the restraint imposed on him by Count Vallensteïn's prohibition. His room was not far from that in which his

patient lay, and he had taken care to point out to Rupert where he was to be found when the Count should inquire for him; nor did he wait long for the anxiously-expected summons. On re-entering the apartment, he found the young Count sitting up, supported by his pillows; his eyes were red with weeping, and his countenance betrayed the deepest affliction.

"Holy father," said he, holding out his hand, "I need not explain, that in me you behold Casimir Vallensteïn, the chosen brother of the ever deplored Wilhelm of Marchfeldt." And at the mention of that name he seemed compelled to yield again to the overwhelming force of his emotions.

"Be comforted, my son; Wilhelm is in heaven, smiling on our tears."

At the same time his own fell in sympathy with the grief of the young soldier, who had in a few moments won for him-

self a warm station in the affections of the good old man.

"Alas, sir!" said he, covering his face with his hands, "I am ashamed and confounded to betray such weakness!—bred a soldier—inured to the ruthless work of war—accustomed to death in all its direst shapes—but Wilhelm!"

"Ay, my son," said Felix, "who can blame the tears which fall for Wilhelm?"

"Besides," said the Count, "the shock has fallen so suddenly. My late dear friend, when we parted, pressed me to visit his castle: he was, in truth, brooding over a project, of which, at a meet season, we shall perhaps speak farther. I consented willingly, but my military duties have been urgent. At length, however, my father's permission for my temporary absence was granted. Last evening, by some chance, we lost, or rather supposed we had lost, our way, though the fact has proved that we were

much nearer to our destined goal than we could have imagined. We were riding over a wide heathy track when the storm overtook us; and, seeing no sign of human habitation, we entered for shelter the Wood of Oaks, where your charity preserved my life: by what accident it was endangered you are already informed. And is it possible that he whom I came to seek is no more?—And is it possible that chance, or rather destiny, has indeed led me to the castle of Marchfeldt?"

"My son," said Friar Felix, "this castle boasts the gentle rule of a noble and lovely lady. May I not apprise her whom it contains?—May I not gladden her with the knowledge that Providence blesses her with the means of affording succour and hospitality to the bosom friend of her only brother?"

A perturbed and agitated look was the only immediate reply to the Friar's request.

"Oh, holy sir!" he said at length, "what will you think of me? and how shall I explain to you those vague and inexplicable sensations, which are even to myself incomprehensible? What shall I do?" said he, appearing to concentrate his thoughts, and muse intensely. "It is indelicate to speak, yet silence may entangle me in inextricable embarrassment."

"Speak, my son! speak fearlessly—disburthen your heart! What you confide to me shall be sacred: and if you need advice or comfort, the best I have to offer are yours."

"Father, your mild piety lends me courage. I will unbosom myself to you. Retire, Rupert. Father, will you tell me—Did Wilhelm—did my brother—ever breathe into your car the wish he nourished so ardently—that I should become indeed his brother?"

"A thousand times, my son; it was his dearest earthly desire."

"And to Louisa—to the Baroness?

Was she, too, aware of the tenour of his views?"

"My son, she was."

"And—and——But I trespass! My questions are becoming indiscreet."

"Proceed, my son; I dare believe you will inquire nothing which I may not answer."

"Well, father, rebuke me if I am too bold. Was the Lady Louisa displeased? —Did she consent?"

"She neither consented, my son, nor withheld her consent: she would not pledge herself to an engagement with one she knew not;—but be not discouraged. Had she beheld your picture when she so declined to pledge herself, her denial methinks would have been less decisive, and her brother's mind made easy. But, alas! that miniature came not to her hand till Wilhelm was no more."

"What miniature, holy sir? Pardon me, you speak in riddles."

"The miniature, my son, which doubtless you presented to the late baron, when encamped together."

"Believe me, sir, I presented no picture to Wilhelm, nor did I ever sit for one. A soldier's time is far otherwise disposed of. But the simple candour of your conduct emboldens me, sir; I will show you unreservedly what is in my heart. I have never loved! It is possible that my rough, unpolished, soldier's demeanour, more practised in camps than courts, more accustomed to menace than to flatter, may fail to win a lady's gentle favour: yet do I hold her brother's will so sacred, that I am bound to seek and plead for that favour, while my heart trembles at the prospect of a failure."

"Take courage, my son," said the Friar smiling, "whencesoever it came, there did arrive, a little while ago, an avant courier, who represented you admirably, and has, if I mistake not, pro-

moted your interests with the Lady of Marchfeldt."

"You allude again to this mysterious portrait. But I have yet more to speak —one word more will give you all my thoughts. Remember I am a soldier, and that truth is, or ought to be, my native language. The injunction of Wilhelm, the flexibility of her nature, the partial prejudice imbibed, perhaps, for him who loved her brother—all these, independent of any individual merit, may have created for me a friend in the breast of Louisa of Marchfeldt. But, father, I have never loved!—I have never beheld her whom I am to love! In short, if—if—In short, father, *should* it so chance that I remain as cold and dull to the perfections of Louisa of Marchfeldt as I have hitherto proved to the attractions of her sex, it would be dishonour to deceive her, it would be insult to mock her with the offering of a cold insensible heart."

Felix was surprised, for this last scruple was such an one as he had not anticipated."

"Well, my son," said he, after a pause, "I cannot say I partake in your apprehensions; but it is best, no doubt, to be beforehand with all things. You are a young man of truth and honour, and how your heart may stand as to love, you know best: yet, as far as *I* can judge of such matters, I should think it might find love enough for Louisa of Marchfeldt, to make you both happy:—but there is no hurry; you shall meet and judge for yourselves."

Again Vallenstein entreated he would not be too precipitate in revealing him to his hostess, though without any positive injunction; and they parted excellent friends.

CHAPTER XI.

"What art thou hiding in thy bosom there?
Is't not an aspic? Fie! Beware of it!
'Tis cold as yet, and quiet; when 'tis warm'd
'Twill use its nature, and implant a sting
Where it is harbour'd!"

When the Baroness and Father Felix met at dinner, there was something so animated in the countenance and singular in the abstractions of the latter, that Louisa rallied him upon them. Her questions respecting the convalescence of her guest were answered in terms so vague and ambiguous, that she knew not what to think; and was most of all surprised to detect the good man, from time to time, in the act of regarding her with a sort of triumphant smile, quite foreign to the habitual expression of his countenance; and he appeared to be encumbered and overweighed by his

thoughts, even to restlessness. Louisa forbore to press her investigation of the cause of these mysterious indications, till she was relieved from the presence of her domestics: and, as they quitted the apartment, an observation of the good father plunged her in tenfold astonishment.

"My daughter, the jet beads with which you have braided up your hair become you well:—albeit, the coronet of pearls becomes you better; it is more graceful and queenlike."

"My dear father," asked the Baroness, "how long is it since you have taken my attire into consideration?—How long have you known the difference between pearls and jet?"

The Friar had thought aloud, and was somewhat confused.

"Why truly, my daughter, I know not how it comes to pass; but ideas are so oddly associated and entangled. Suppose, my child, you bring your lute into

the corridor this evening, and sing the vesper hymn. It will soothe and compose your wounded guest."

"It may rather disturb him, father. Besides, from what I can learn, he is doing well: to-morrow, perhaps, he may quit his apartment; and, meanwhile, though I would be deficient in no fair courtesy to my guest, neither would I be deemed forward."

"You are ever right, my child. But—but there are circumstances which justify a more forward show of kindness than others, even from a maiden. Louisa, my child, if you knew what ear would listen to your vesper song, your reluctance would cease."

"And who is this stranger then?"

"It is," said the good Friar, no longer able to contain himself; "it is the gallant and virtuous Casimir, our blessed Wilhelm's bosom friend!"

"Casimir!—Holy mother! Is it possible?" cried the Baroness, starting from

her seat, while the rose and lily alternately chased each other over her varying cheek. "Oh! had I known the castle contained such a guest!—But why, why, dear father, have I been kept in ignorance? Has he been watchfully attended?—Has every care been shown him? Oh, my father, I can hardly bear the surprise!"

"Be composed, my child; all is well—all is as it should be! Seat yourself, and I will relate to you what has passed."

When the good man described to her the emotion exhibited by young Vallenstein, on learning the early fate of his friend, she felt her heart moved by the tenderest good-will towards her guest; and every word, as he proceeded, increased her sympathy and admiration, when she interrupted him, by fearfully and eagerly asking—If in Vallenstein he had recognised the original of the miniature she had found on the castle ramparts?

"Truly, daughter, so much does he

resemble it, that last night, after binding up his wound, as the light of the tapers fell upon his face, I started, thinking we had met before; but he was so pale from loss of blood that it perplexed my remembrance."

"And is he yet so pale?—Is all danger indeed over?—Are you convinced of his safety?"

"As I can be of the s. man! If he dies, his w will be guiltless."

The good father now pr peat to her that part of his with Casimir which regarde had long been the sole su and investigator of one female heart; but hearts are, at the best, a baffling, puzzling study. He, good. man, maugre long practice, as will forthwith become manifest, was little better than a dunce in such matters: with the same simplicity as he had received the communications of Vallensteïn, did he transmit

them to her whom they concerned. Felix, as he magnified the honour and candour of the Count, and his delicate regard for Louisa's peace of mind, noted not the heightening colour on the cheek of his auditor.

"I perceive, sir," said she haughtily, having heard him to a conclusion, "that Count Casimir of Vallensteïn has formed a very false estimate of the character of Louisa of Marchfeldt! As he was the friend of my brother, I shall condescend to make him better acquainted with her. But is it possible, sir, you could wish me to serenade a man who has thus expressed himself?—How imprudent! I might terrify the apprehensive gentleman into a fever! No, no, I will teach the Count to respect the dignity which abides in the heart, and governs the conduct of a noble female."

"What mean you, my child?" said the Friar, standing aghast; "surely you are not offended by the truth and candour

of this confession? The poor young man says he has never loved, and how should he know whether he can love *you* till he sees you? I expected you to applaud his generous apprehensiveness of ensnaring your affections."

"My dear father, in truth you are a novice in these matters. What you have related disappoints and surprises me;—nay, had not this man been the friend of Wilhelm, I should not scruple to give his generous apprehensiveness the name of foppish presumption, and would take effectual precautions from the danger he fears for me, by not looking upon him while he remains at Marchfeldt; but, as it is, I am compelled to the adoption of other measures."

Highly disconcerted, the good Friar returned to his patient, who was quick-sighted enough to discover that the holy man was involved in some perplexity, and likewise gifted with sufficient penetration to trace that perplexity pretty nigh to its source. But it was easy to

change conjecture into certainty with so unsophisticated a subject as Father Felix.

"My father," he began, "I feel myself wonderously recovered; your unguent has produced an almost magical effect upon my wound: to-morrow you must emancipate me. And, my good father, you must be my ambassador to the fair lady of the castle: bear to her my humble greeting, and request that she will to-morrow grant an audience to one who, from a thousand motives, yearns to throw himself at her feet."

"Time enough—time enough!" said the Friar, with an embarrased air. "Let us talk of other matters; give me your hand; we must not be too hasty. Let us see if there be any lingerings of fever."

"Oh, no! my fever is gone. But will you not fly, holy father, and carry my solicitations to the Baroness?"

"To-morrow, dear son."

"Ay, but my whole thoughts are bent on this interview! Believe me, I shall not close my eyes this night if I

am kept in suspense. Go then, dear sir, obtain for me permission to visit the Baroness in the morning."

"How wild and inconsistent is youth!" thought the Friar. "A few hours ago I might not so much as name him to the Baroness. Now, forsooth, he is all haste to throw himself at her feet; and I am now as loth to be his messenger as then I was eager to perform that office."

The good man's reluctance was very visible.

"Oh!" cried the wayward invalid, "what new obstacle has arisen?"

And throwing himself forward, he seized the hand of Felix with impetuous vehemence.

"Oh! sir, trifle not with a mind to which suspense is agony. Speak!—I *will* know the meaning of this cruel hesitation."

"In good truth, my good son, you bewilder my senses! If you will be quiet a moment, and allow me to breathe, I will speak. But when I have told you the

truth, you will throw yourself into a fresh paroxysm doubtless, and your fever will return."

"Any thing, sir, any thing but suspense!"

"Well then, my son, listen to the simple fact. I revealed to the Baroness who was her guest."

"Oh, Heavens!—and she heard it with displeasure?"

"No! she heard it with delight. But, as ill luck would have it, never presaging that harm could result from it, I told her that as you had never been in love, nor had ever seen her, you could not answer for your affections, and were therefore fearful lest she should unwittingly surrender hers to you, ere the equivalent was secured to her."

The young Count covered his face with his clothes, and the couch shook beneath him from the violent agitation of his frame: in short, the distress of the poor Friar was extreme on perceiving

that his patient was convulsed by a strong fit of hysterical laughter. The probable consequences terrified him, and he began bitterly to regret his want of skill in such missions, as he had, in his ignorance, that day undertaken. At length, in a voice which expressed his consternation—

"Be comforted, my son," said he; "if I have done mischief where I meant nothing but good, I must try to repair my fault. I will seek Louisa; never has she refused a request of mine, nor will she this. So take comfort, my son."

And away he went to seek the Baroness, whom he startled not a little by his rueful countenance.

"What is the matter, sir? sure the Count is not worse!"

"But he *is* worse! A fine day's work I have made for him, poor youth! His fever is returning, and he is growing delirious; and all for a matter of no more importance than because I declined so-

liciting you to receive him to-morrow: yet I only wished to defer the request till I should be likely to find you in a more accessible mood than you were in when I left you; but it is not now a petition I bring you, it is an appeal to your Christian charity!—Nay, for aught I know, should you refuse it, you will burthen your conscience with the young man's death."

"All this is very inconsistent, and very embarrassing!—But the friend of Wilhelm shall have no just cause of complaint against Louisa of Marchfeldt. Tell the Count, when he can with prudence quit his apartment, the Baroness of Marchfeldt will be happy to receive, with every due consideration, the friend of her lamented brother. Count Vallenstein as little needs fear to encounter ungracious repulse as unsolicited affection. Either he has seen but little of my sex, or it has been his lot to meet with strange specimens. But hasten, father!—

If your patient is, indeed, to derive any advantage from my acquiescence, pray administer the medicine immediately."

Father Felix waited not to be bidden twice, but was soon by the side of his impetuous guest, who appeared transported with the intelligence; and Father Felix was almost as much alarmed for the effects of his extravagant satisfaction, as he had lately been for the result of his unreasonable despair.

"Well," said he, "from the little I have seen of human nature, I begin to suspect there is full as much dignity, consistency, and fortitude, in that half the creation commonly deemed the weakest, as in ours. There is no lack of sensibility in the Lady of Marchfeldt; yet no one, I warrant, will ever behold her ranting and raving for any calamity Providence may send her, as you, my son, are doing for a childish trifle; nor yet yielding herself up the passive prey of despair, like my unhappy Wilhelm."

" Ay," exclaimed the incorrigible Casimir, forgetting his professed coldness of temperament, " those, father, those are the women to die for!—Those who would die for no man! Let others pursue the yielding beauty, who flies but to be caught. *I* must be subdued by the superb loveliness, the majestic tyranny of beauty! What is there on earth so sublime as the disdain of a fine woman?"

" If that is the case," thought the Friar, " farther disquietude on my part is needless, for you are likely to have your taste indulged.—But he is light-headed, poor youth, to a certainty, and it is wrong to encourage his raving by listening or replying to it." And with this reflection, and a few salutary hints to Rupert, respecting the management of his master should the fever increase, bade him good night.

The pleasure the Baroness would have felt in knowing Vallenstein was her guest was damped and troubled by the intelli-

gence she had received from the Friar, and deep and intricate were her ponderings thereon. At all events, she found infinite cause for self-congratulation that she had listened to her better judgment, rather than to the feelings of the moment, when her beloved Wilhelm, with such powerful pleading, urged her to betroth herself to this man: the bare idea of his allusion to the union projected by her brother, in so precipitate a manner, left an unfavourable impression of his delicacy, and Louisa felt she might be very unhappy with a man, who was gallant in battle and faithful in friendship, if he possessed not also that mental tact, that pervading refinement, to which all social intercourse owes at once its softness and its elevation.

"Alas!" said she, deeply sighing, "the most fervent, the dearest, the latest wish of my beloved Wilhelm, must never be realized!"

On the second morning of Count Ca-

simir's sojourn in Marchfeldt castle, as the Baroness sate at breakfast, Friar Felix entered.—

"My dear daughter," said he, "I have attended many a sick body, and many a sick soul, but so wilful and wayward a patient as this soldier have I never dealt with before! I consented last night to his rising this morning, because people in his state require humouring; but he never waited for me to feel his pulse, nor administer his early draught, but rose at peep of day, and when I sought him in his apartment the bird had flown: in short, I found him parading in the corridor, and when I approached him in order to express my surprise at his disobedience, he led me up to the picture of that sly looking Cardinal Zoraschi, and asked me whose it was?

"'It is,' said I, 'the Cardinal Zoraschi, who was great uncle to the lady of the castle'

"'Then,' observed he, 'we are re-

lated; for he is likewise my great uncle.'

"'Ah! Count,' I replied, 'you might have claimed kindred through a purer channel!—Connexion with a man who was in his time the darkest intriguer in Europe, and to whose plots neither conscience, nor honour, nor humanity, presented a barrier, is no credit to any line.'

"'He was a very resolute fellow,' returned the Count, 'and possessed a clear and cloudless intellect.'

"You know, dear daughter, that the name of this cardinal is odious to my ear, for the discredit he did to the sacred profession; but soldiers and priests behold things, no doubt, with very different eyes.

"There must be a strange defect in that man's vision, methinks, who can view the deeds of Zoraschi with approbation. In this point, how widely would Wilhelm have discorded with his friend?

—*He* shuddered at the name of Zoraschi!

"But, my daughter, I forget—the young Count anxiously awaits my return, having sent me to repeat his petition for leave to present himself before you."

"I will have the honour to receive him immediately," replied the Baroness. And in a few moments Count Casimir of Vallensteïn was introduced.

This introduction could not have taken place at a less auspicious moment;—all the strange conduct the Count had exhibited, since he had been her guest, was now working together in the mind of Louisa, and his implied approbation of a dark cruel dissembler like Zoraschi completed her disgust, so that she was obliged to call to her remembrance all his kindness to Wilhelm, and all Wilhelm's affection for him, in order to counteract the influence her opinion would have had on her reception of him; but,

instead of the forward presuming demeanour his conversation with Father Felix had led her to expect, the most winning and graceful timidity characterised his address; the leading expression of his countenance was that of melancholy—the pallid hue of his cheek, as he entered the room, was exchanged for a deep crimson. Scarcely did he lift his fine eyes to the sister of Wilhelm, who extended her hand, which he approached and kissed, half kneeling:—his embarrassment, apparently the effect of intense feeling, overpowered him, and he silently took his seat near the Baroness. Louisa was touched and surprised, as she beheld him internally struggling with emotions so honourable to his nature; for she doubted not that his whole thoughts were filled by Wilhelm. She had, however, considered the line of conduct it became her to adopt; and the more she felt her heart inclined to respond to the sensibility of her guest, the more her

mind resolved to hold its course with steadiness and dignity.

"My lord," said she, and the tears forced their way to his eyes, "he is gone, from whom you expected your welcome!—But the sister of Baron Wilhelm cannot be other than the friend of Casimir of Vallensteïn. I flatter myself, the skill and tenderness of Father Felix have removed the danger of your wound, but your restoration will require some time to accomplish. May I then hope, that the gloom which at present hangs over this castle will not alarm you into a premature removal?"

"Alas! madam," returned Vallensteïn, in a voice the most musical that had ever fallen on the ear of Louisa, "the gloom of Marchfeldt but too well harmonises with the colour of my thoughts! If I am permitted—If I may, without presumption, continue a few days longer a trespasser on the hospitality of the Lady of Marchfeldt?"—

And he looked timidly towards her, as if somewhat questioning the cordiality of the invitation her courtesy had induced her to offer. She was aware of this silent appeal, and again admired not only the delicacy and modesty of her guest, but the tact which rendered him sensible to the touch of coldness, slight as it was, that mingled in her reception of him.

"The friend of my brother," said she emphatically, "cannot be a trespasser under this roof."

After breakfast, attended by the Friar, they made the tour of the castle, ascended to the ramparts, visited the paintings and statuary, and examined the collections of natural history, accumulated by the different chiefs of the house, most of the later ones having been celebrated not only for their prowess in the field, but known to the world as eminent for taste and science. In the course of the morning's amusements the mind of

Casimir gradually, and very modestly, developed such a fund of intelligence and information as astonished his hostess. Architecture, painting, natural philosophy, in short, every subject seemed to enter within the range of his comprehensive intellect. But, in spite of the discussions into which he was naturally led, the deep melancholy of his countenance knew no variation, nor did he depart, in the least, from the distant and half fearful respect which he had, from his first introduction, rendered the Baroness.

The evening again closed in with gloom and tempest; the rain beat, the winds roared: but Louisa, seated at her embroidery, listened to the melodious voice of Vallenstëin, as it poured on her ear the sweet and lofty numbers of Tasso; and the storm that evening raved in vain around the battlements of Marchfeldt.

CHAPTER XII.

"Thus, it is true, from the sad years of life
We sometimes do short hours, yea, minutes strike,
Keen, blissful, bright!"

Joanna Baillie.

The following day the Baroness conducted her guest to the Isle of Willows, and availed herself of his exquisite taste, in directing some finishing decorations for the chapel. Every alteration he suggested was either obviously useful, or highly ornamental; and she was delighted to perceive the advantage her plan could not fail to derive from his advice. As they sailed homeward—

"I am fearful, Count," said the Baroness, "that you will weary of the inevitable monotony of your visit, and I would fain procure you some variation. You hunt, no doubt:—the stables con-

tain fleet coursers, the kennels well-trained hounds, and the mews strong-winged falcons: the neighbouring country, moreover, abounds in game."

"I thank you, madam," returned the Count with an air of mortification; "but will you pardon me, if I venture to confess that I prefer the monotony of your ladyship's society to any variety your ranger can provide for me."

He paused, and then said, correcting himself, "Yet I ought not thus to engross your time. When I reflect how yesterday and this morning have fled, I am astonished at my own unconscious presumption!—I have, indeed, monopolised your whole leisure. Yes, madam, I am fond of hunting: with your permission I will take that exercise to-morrow."

"But, as I am your surgeon, you must likewise obtain my consent; and that will not be easy," said the Friar, "while the wound in your side is hardly healed."

"True, indeed," said Louisa; "how could I be so thoughtless?—Well then, Count, you must still keep the pleasures of the chase in perspective."

He bowed, but refrained from paying the obvious compliment; and the more Louisa compared the humble, respectful, homage of his conduct towards her, the mournful tenderness with which he deplored her brother, and the delicate refinement of thought and feeling which spoke in every word he uttered, and beamed in every glance of his eye, with the report of Father Felix, the less could she reconcile such flagrant contradiction; and she began to satisfy herself that the singular *naïveté* of the good priest had led him into some strange mistake.

Day after day elapsed, every one of which revealed some new talent, some fresh mental perfection, in the friend of Wilhelm. He directed and enlivened the studies of the Baroness;—they drew, they sung, they rode, and walked to-

gether; and every evening Louisa dwelt, with added interest, on his mellow tones, his exquisite pathos, his accurate ear, as he read to her her favourite poets; or offered the strains of bards, hitherto unknown, to her admiration. Nor was her own intellectual store much inferior to that of her guest; her mind could boast a masculine strength and scope, and was richly embellished by various and illustrious acquirements, which did not prejudice or diminish the more attractive feminine graces. These acquirements had been the companions and beguilers of her solitude; but it now appeared to her that she had never before prized them at their true value. It is no wonder if the mistrust of the Baroness was gradually dissipated by the timid respect of Vallensteïn, which never abated nor forgot itself; he even persevered in denying himself the use of such expressions of admiration as every polished man believes himself entitled to pour into the

ear of a beautiful woman :—it seemed as though he avoided flattery as an insult too gross to be hazarded with so pure and dignified a being. Thus matters stood; but all Louisa's penetration was baffled, in her attempt to discover whether the breast of Casimir harboured for her any other sentiment than the cold and distant one of an almost awful esteem. It is only necessary to say, that this was become a subject of even painful inquiry; for she found, with dismay, that the precaution she had deemed so needless, and impertinent, was more requisite than she could have foreseen; but she determined that no inadvertency on her part should ever afford Vallenstein the triumph of guessing at the new and troublesome inmate which had found entrance to her bosom.

The day on which the Count left his apartment Rupert had been dismissed on some secret embassy; and, immediately on his return, both his master and him-

self appeared, like the rest of the inhabitants of Marchfeldt, in deep mourning. When first Vallensteïn stood before Louisa in his sable attire, she was surprised into an expression of affectionate gratitude; for, with a mind sensitive and energetic as hers, it was impossible to keep caution ever on the alert, and prepared against attacks so delicate and artful as those to which it was daily exposed. Of one thing she soon became convinced,—if Vallensteïn had never loved, and did not now love, it was not because he was incapable of loving.

"No, alas!" thought she, "his heart has not yet found its object!—When it does, how pure, how tender, how sublime will be the workings of that master passion in the breast of Vallensteïn!"

Now she harassed herself with conjectures *why* she was not that object; she explored with restless anxiety her own defects, and still returned to the conclusion, that love is no deduction of

reason or of will, but born of capricious fancy.

"Perhaps my brother's earnest desire for our union may have pressed like a fetter uneasily on his mind!—He *may* have a fault, and that fault may be a touch of human perverseness. Well, though he does not love, he shall respect me. Louisa of Marchfeldt will never be rejected even by Vallensteïn."

Vallensteïn, meanwhile, was by no means unconscious of the progress he was making. He saw, and exulted; and, while he explored every movement in the bosom of Louisa, he knew that his own was impervious to her. He knew, and gloried in the knowledge, that to the mystery which enveloped his conduct all the penetration of her mind was directed; and that on its solution her peace already depended. All this he believed was ascertained, and he was right. It was now time that he should

change his plan of operations, and he prepared accordingly.

The hermitage and chapel were so far completed, that the solemn service to which the Baroness had especially dedicated them might now commence; and that day of the week on which the late Baron of Marchfeldt closed his eyes upon sublunary sorrows was appointed for the first celebration of that pious office, which, from henceforth, was to be performed daily and for ever. The soul of Louisa, as well as her person, was that day wrapped in mourning, and her whole thoughts were with those for whose departed spirits she was invoking pardon and bliss. She had not so much as a glance for earth, or the forms which walk thereon; she saw only Wilhelm and Blanche in the bright realms of eternal happiness. Her countenance, her form, had caught the character of her spiritual musings; and Vallensteïn, as

he looked upon her, felt his heart subdued by the more than mortal perfection which beamed around her; so that, had her mind been less sublimely engaged, she might have perceived that his affections had no longer an object to seek. They returned from the Isle of Willows, immersed in the silent sadness that befitted the solemnity at which they had assisted: and, on arriving at the castle, the Baroness, extending her hand to Vallensteïn,—

"Valued friend of my Wilhelm," said she, "I must remain alone during the remainder of this day; to-morrow we meet as usual."

He seized the offered hand, and pressed it to his lips, and to his bosom, with a fervency that would have surprised her, but that the paleness of his cheek, and dejection of his eye, caused her to attribute this unwonted emotion to the softening impression left on his spirits by the affecting office in which they had

been mutually engaged. The hitherto unbridled spirit of this man was now completely, inextricably, enthralled. In the mental sense of the word, he had never loved till now; but now his heart, soul, and even his reason, were imbued, and pervaded by a sentiment, in whose existence he had, until this period, refused to believe. Day after day, hour after hour, the delightful influence had been stealing imperceptibly, yet rapidly, upon him, till he was all won. He could not endure to lose sight of Louisa one moment; and now, as she quitted the apartment, he flung himself impetuously on a couch, and groaned as if some heavy calamity had overtaken him.

"No," exclaimed he, "it is now decreed!—No power on earth shall wrest that woman from me. Hatred, deep and eternal!—Love, consuming and powerful!—Ye strong, ye omnipotent influences, shall we not conquer?"

His heart, which had hitherto obeyed

the directions of a cool and speculative head, was now a disorganised chaos, and he found the unwonted tumult insupportable.

"No," said he, "I will bear this no longer! Besides, it is time she should hear me speak of love. The proud heart, the lovely lips of Louisa, shall confess my triumph!"

Thus, striding over the apartments, the corridor, the ramparts, like a troubled spirit, and venting his restlessness in sudden soliloquy, did he spend a day, whose slow lapse he found intolerable.

It was midnight when the Baroness softly descended a private stair, leading from her apartment to a narrow vaulted passage, terminating in a low door of entrance to the chapel, covered with her long and flowing veil, a taper in her hand, and her eyes fixed on the ground. She advanced towards the tomb, which contained the ashes of Wilhelm and

Blanche; but, on reaching it, started in surprise, to perceive herself anticipated. Vallensteïn was weeping over the remains of his friend:—he stood by the sepulchre, his right arm thrown across it, and his face, enveloped in his mantle, was pressed against the marble entablature. That night many tapers were burning in the chapel, so that the Baroness perceived immediately who it was that thus usurped her rights. Deeply affected by this new and striking instance of Vallensteïn's sensibility, she was cautiously withdrawing, but he heard her light step, and started from the tomb.

"Forgive me, forgive me, my lady!" cried he: "on my soul this is no wilful intrusion."

"Count," said Louisa mildly, "be not thus agitated!—It is impossible the heart of Wilhelm's sister can repay with displeasure such true, such tender friendship! No; it blesses you, Casimir."

"Does it—does it bless me, Louisa? Why may we not mingle our tears? Both mourn the same object. Oh! let us weep together."

It was the first time the words Casimir, Louisa, had been thus exchanged between them.

The Baroness paused for a moment,—

"No, Count Vallensteïn," she said, "not now; my mind is composed and elevated by the exercises of the day, and I would preserve my devotions in the same calm tenor they have hitherto held. Be not offended—I *must* remain alone."

"And yet—yet, Louisa, could he, to whose spiritual bliss those precious hours of solitude will be dedicated—could he look down on earth, if any earthly desire still clings to him, what sight could he behold that would most gladden him?—How may we best prove our affection for the memory of Wilhelm? Speak, Louisa, speak!—What was the fervent

wish that he breathed forth upon his last sigh?"

"Oh, Casimir!" said Louisa; and the tears flowed fast from her eyes; "I understand your appeal. I do not—cannot reject it. But this is no hour, no place, for a subject thus agitating!—I pray you leave me."

"Methinks," returned he solemnly, pointing to the tomb—"methinks it is the only place. Here, under the sanction of Wilhelm's spirit—Here it is, and this is the hour, when Louisa of Marchfeldt should pledge her pure vows with Casimir of Vallensteïn!"

Louisa knew that her brother had indeed left the world with but one temporal wish upon his heart,—and that in uniting her fate with that of Vallensteïn, this sole wish would be accomplished.

"It is enough, Casimir!" she uttered. —"Now leave me!"

Casimir, who had thrown himself at

her feet, rose instantly, pressed her hand to his lips, and, without a word, quitted the chapel. The Baroness found it no easy task to recall that spirit of sober melancholy with which she had approached her brother's tomb;—her thoughts were unsettled, her bosom throbbed, and she looked back on the recent scene as on a bewildering vision. Her heart, indeed, was Vallensteïn's, ere she knew, or guessed, that he had exchanged his for it; but now, that he had impetuously demanded her love, and enforced the demand by the strongest, the most irresistible appeals:—now, that the word was uttered which decided her fate, such was the trouble and agitation of her thoughts, that she was scarcely capable of distinguishing if happiness had any part in the confusion.

The meeting of the following morning was not without embarrassment on the part of the Baroness; but the only difference perceptible in the conduct of

Count Vallensteïn was, that now, the tenderness of his accent, and the fond admiration of his glance, mingled delightfully with the delicate, though hitherto cold, respect, he had evinced for his hostess. Father Felix partook with them of their morning repast, and no allusion to the events of the chapel was made till it was ended; then Casimir rose, took the hand of the Baroness, and kneeling before the holy man, said—

"Father, the last wish of Wilhelm is fulfilled!—His friend and his sister have mutually plighted their faith. Grant them your blessing, father."

Surprised and overjoyed, the good old man laid his hand upon their heads, wept over them, and blessed them devoutly. The Baroness, relieved from the trouble and agitation in which the suddenness of so important a decision had at first plunged her, now acknowledged to herself that she was happy; nor did she forbid her countenance to

confess as much. To divest herself of the dignity of her character was impossible, since it was her leading feature; but from the moment that she became the affianced of Vallenstein, it was tempered with an indescribable sweetness,—a gentle observance of him who was to be the master of her fate, and whom it would soon become her sacred duty to obey and cherish.

A few days after the events we have recorded, the Count said—

"Your brother had a picture, Louisa. That picture taught my heart its earliest lesson of love. Now it has a triumphant rival; yet I still feel some fond yearnings after my first flame.—Give it me, Louisa."

The Baroness unlocked a cabinet containing some papers of her brother's, and produced the miniature.

"You give it me, Louisa! It is mine for ever,—is it not?"

"How can you question it? I give

you myself for ever. What motive then could induce me to withhold this lifeless copy from your wish?"

"This then," murmured he to himself, "is accomplished at least."

And as he grasped the picture, and lodged it in his bosom, he smiled, and the Baroness started and shuddered; it was a smile such as she had never seen before, although she had heard the description of one which must have resembled it: that smile was momentary, but it was not the impression of a moment it left behind it. The Baroness perceived that some internal movement of the mind had produced this appalling effect on the beautiful features of her affianced lord without his permission; he was aware at once that the meteor had not passed unobserved, for looking fixedly at her, he asked in a slow, cold tone, "What is the matter?"

Nothing, that could be explained, was the matter. To divert his thoughts and

her own, she turned to a little neglected box which stood in a corner of the room, and touching a spring, said,

"Perhaps, Casimir, you flatter yourself you have never had a rival! But look here!"

And she put into his hand the miniature she had found upon the castle ramparts.

"It is a *chef d'œuvre*," said he; "no common artist produced this painting; but when it was taken, or how it reached you, is a mystery I cannot solve. But," added he in a tone of pique, "I need not be jealous of my rival, so far as I can judge of his treatment; he has been forced to content himself with a cold lodging," glancing at the box from whence he had seen it taken.

"Casimir, said the Baroness, "this picture came to me, as I have told you, mysteriously. I could only guess who might be the original; my brother's often expressed desire for our union

induced me to wish it might be your resemblance; and the only probable way in which I could account for its being found in the castle, was derived from the notion that he had brought it hither; in short, for why should I dissemble it? while I believed myself contemplating your features, that bit of ivory was my inseparable companion."

"And by what accident was your opinion changed? To whom did your second thoughts attribute these features?"

Louisa had ever felt an indescribable reluctance to uttering the name of Wolfsteïn in the presence of Vallensteïn: it had never since their acquaintance been pronounced by either of them. Now, however, there was no alternative.

"I had a vague suspicion," she replied, "that it might represent the countenance of Sir Warbeck of Wolfsteïn, a man towards whom my brother expressed an unconquerable aversion."

"Really, madam!" exclaimed the Count, while a deadly hue overspread his cheek and whitened his lips, "I thank you, from my soul, for the compliment you have paid my features. Did not your brother tell you Wolfsteïn was a fiend? That the fiend looked through his eyes and smiled upon his lips? I know he did!"

And, with a look of unutterable rage, he dashed the picture to the floor and broke it with his foot.

"Count Vallensteïn," said the Baroness, "I never have contended with aught like this! I did not even know that it might happen; but you shall have leisure to recollect yourself."

And she quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Now go with me, and with this holy man,
Into the chantry by: there, before him,
And underneath that consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith,
That my most jealous and too doubtful soul
May live in peace."

"FOOL!" exclaimed the Count, gnashing his teeth and smiting his forehead as the door closed between them: "Yet, no matter! This will blow over! If I were a lover now—*only* a lover, I should seek such conflicts as these; I should court and cultivate them for the zest they give to the languid monotony of mutual love. But time presses—there is no leisure for the luxurious vicissitudes of mutual torment, mutual forgiveness; I *must* patch up a hurried peace, even though I crouch for it."

He wrote as follows:

"I *have* recollected myself, and the result is repentance. Come, Louisa, and by your gentle forbearance render my self-upbraidings doubly bitter."

The Baroness, as she retired to her apartment, found herself like one who has received a stunning blow; all her ideas were involved in confusion, and all she perceived distinctly was by what hand the outrage had been inflicted.

"Oh Vallenstein! I believed you perfect," cried she, as on entering her apartment she sate down and endeavoured to reflect coolly: she knew nothing either practically or theoretically of lovers' quarrels, her feelings were therefore unmixedly painful.

"Casimir! Wilhelm's Casimir! My Casimir! He is degraded! He is no longer the manly, noble, rational being I believed him yesterday. Alas! what a humiliating change has one half hour produced!"

The Baroness shed no tears, but the pain of her heart was intense; and the more deeply she mused, the more calmly she reviewed the recent scene, the stronger was her conviction that she had cause to grieve. Meanwhile Barbara entered with the billet. "Lay it down, Barbara, and leave me."

When left alone, she pursued her thoughts for some time ere she opened it; on opening it, her first emotion was pleasure, her next, surprise, that so violent a storm could be so suddenly allayed.

"Yet," said she, "the storm always passes long before the devastation it causes can be repaired. I will see Vallensteïn, and explain my feelings to him."

He, meanwhile, well versed in such matters, expected a long warfare of billets, and was much astonished when the Baroness entered.

"Count," said she, approaching him,

"I will not tell you I can immediately forget what has happened,—for I will never deceive you; but I forgive you, Casimir, from my soul. To-day you will not desire my society. To-morrow, every visible trace of what we cannot recall shall be done away, and we will return, so far as is possible, to what we have been."

These words operated like wormwood on the cold and haughty nature to which they were addressed. The Count felt awed beneath the calm dignified candour of the Baroness; his soul was stung to the quick; he was offended, wounded, maddened; he lifted his eyes to her face, to seek some trace of that weakness which her words refused to betray, but not a tear had fallen: he perceived at once that to trifle with such a woman would be ruin, nor dared he give vent to the mildest of those passions which warred within him; he covered his face with his mantle.

"Oh Louisa! Louisa!" he cried, "you do not, you cannot love me, or for a momentary fault, a fault repented on the instant, you could not treat me thus inflexibly! Do not quit me to-day, Louisa, or I shall go mad."

"Casimir, mistake me not; I have no resentment, but I have sustained a sudden, a violent shock, and am not recovered. If I remain with you, some trace of what I have felt, nay, of what I still feel, may involuntarily reproach you. Be content then, my friend. Let us part for the day."

Now, for once in his life, he felt himself the weakest, and the rage which accompanied this conviction shook him to the centre: he remained still in the attitude of despair, motionless, his face covered in his mantle. The Baroness was softened and consoled by emotions which she believed were excited by remorse and contrition; she took his hand and pressed it.

"Do not give way to grief, Casimir! Commune with your own noble nature till we meet again, and we will meet happily. Till to-morrow, adieu, dear Casimir!"

"Well, madam," said he, as she disappeared, "this is your hour, and to accelerate mine, you must enjoy your short-lived sovereignty. Oh, how exquisite to trample on the pride of such a woman! What a superb creature it is! I have wrung her heart, yet not a tear has fallen from her eyes! But it shall be my pastime to break this stubbornness! Ay, and we will have tears too, if she knows how to weep."

In fact he loved to distraction, if any feeling in such a nature as his could properly be called love. It was only a character so natively majestic as Louisa's that could have awakened in his bosom a sentiment so restless and predominant as that with which his pride now combated,

yet was there something new and delightful in the conflict; the calm continuing happiness of reciprocal consent was not made for him, and even with Louisa, he would have wearied of it; yet to be prohibited the sight of her for a whole day—that she, too, should have resolution to forbid him her presence; for however mildly the sentence was pronounced, still in effect it was imperative, it was incredible, unparalleled in his experience, and required revenge.

"I am glad, however," said he, "that I have met with this specimen. I divided the sex into two classes; sweet creatures, and viragoes—this is neither—this has what we call a soul in it."

The following morning the lovers met as usual; Vallenstein awaited in the corridor the moment when the Baroness quitted her apartment: he flew to her.—"Louisa! are you yet appeased? Has a day's banishment from your society expiated my crime?"

"Casimir! let it never again be named between us; it is all over."

The day passed apparently as many others had done, in harmonious calm: another and another followed, and as Louisa did not cherish the remembrance of the unfortunate disagreement, it gradually faded upon her mind to the dimness of a half-remembered dream. One day, as they were pursuing their mutual studies, a courier arrived from Vienna, with a letter from Baron Erdenheïm: its purport was chiefly to remind the Lady of Marchfeldt, that the time she had fixed for her arrival at Vienna had been suffered to elapse, that her hotel was completed, and that that of Erdenheïm was, at all events, ready to receive her; and, moreover, that the Emperor had inquired repeatedly when the Baroness of Marchfeldt would be presented, having even added, 'It is time she should show herself at court. Tell

her so, Baron."—"An intimation which," said Baron Erdenheïm, "I need not remind my dear niece, amounts to a command."

"Officious!" muttered Vallensteïn: "but what do you intend, my sweet Louisa?"

"In the present instance it seems *my intentions* would be superfluous: I must obey the Emperor. But," said she, remarking the cloud which instantly overcast the face of her betrothed lord, "why should you be uneasy, Casimir? True, the calm, unbroken intercourse we have enjoyed must cease for a while; but you will follow to Vienna, and the Emperor will grant a willing sanction to my union with the son of his firmest friend. Come, Vallensteïn, be cheerful. We were forgetting that the world contained aught but ourselves—trust me, it was time we should awake. It is necessary I should repair to Vienna; and, therefore, I will

banish my reluctance to the step with all my power. Be advised, my Casimir, and do likewise."

"I would, madam, I was gifted with your philosophy. But perhaps you have a taste for exhibition—perhaps you are weary of the monotony of Marchfeldt. Nay, I cannot blame you, Louisa; it is indeed most meet that such a flower should be transplanted from the solitary banks of the Raab, to bloom in the imperial gardens."

"Is it possible, Vallenstein? But you do not mean it—you are ruffled by this interruption to a life of happiness; but let us at least enjoy the present hour; much preparation must be made for the journey, and several days will yet elapse ere I must needs depart."

Vallenstein endeavoured to rally his spirits; but it was an obvious effort to throw off the gloom which from that moment possessed him. The Baroness, by a thousand nameless and delicate

proofs of affection, exerted herself to sooth and enliven him — something brooded heavily on his mind—he was restless and petulant, and scarcely seemed conscious of the increased tenderness of Louisa's manner.

The Baroness resolved, before she quitted Marchfeldt, again to attend mass in the little chapel on the island, and the monks of St. Guthred engaged to meet her there: Vallensteïn, of course, attended her.

That evening, besides the monks, there was a stranger in the chapel, clad, like the rest, in mourning. Louisa barely perceived the circumstance; but when the requiem commenced, the tones, somewhat tremulous, yet sweet and powerful, of the stranger, mingling with the feeble ones of the ancient brothers, caught her attention, and she looked on him a second time; she beheld an elegant, manly youth, whose figure was tall and martial, and his aspect noble; its natural expres-

sion could hardly be guessed at, as at that moment it seemed to have given place to some powerful impulse of grief and indignation, and his eyes appeared bent on conveying to those of the Baroness some message of bitter rebuke. Oppressed and confounded, she turned her glance on Vallensteïn, hoping that the stranger had escaped his observation; but to her surprise, she saw that her miniature was, with the case open, in his hand, and that he was casting alternate looks of exultation on it and on the stranger, till, perceiving her eye directed towards him, he smiled fondly on her, and replaced it in his bosom. The ceremony over, he led her somewhat hastily to her barge, and sunk again into the gloomy meditations which had for some days involved him. At length,

"Did you perceive the stranger who assisted in this evening's service?" asked the Baroness.

"Oh, yes! I did observe him!"

" Who was he, I wonder? and why came he?"

" I can answer both questions—who he was, I know; and why he came, I know: his name is Wolfsteïn, and he came to insult your brother's memory."

" And that," exclaimed Louisa, " was Wolfsteïn!"

" Yes! And do you not shudder to reflect that you have breathed the same air, and trod the same ground with Wolfsteïn? Have you already forgotten your brother's forebodings respecting that man? What think you brought him there?"

" However ominous his presence may be, with you by my side, Casimir, why should I fear? My heart is yours; he cannot endanger that, and it was to the fascinations of Wolfsteïn my brother's fears were chiefly directed."

" He does not consider himself so harmless, or he would not be lurking here. If he fails in creating us some

trouble, if we find that no disaster follows the sinister presage of this evening, why then, stars may shoot, and owls may scream at noon-day for me; I will leave the prophetical mantle for who will catch it."

"You alarm me, dear Vallensteïn! What can we have to apprehend?"

"To-morrow may tell us farther on that subject: as yet I know not."

The Count had taught Louisa to think well before she spoke; dissimulation nothing could have led her to practise, and she had found the reserve and silence she was obliged occasionally to assume a new and painful lesson. Had it not been for her now repeated experience of Vallensteïn's irritable habit, she would have candidly expressed her surprise at the small resemblance she could trace between the stranger in the chapel and the Wolfsteïn her brother had so frequently described to her. It is true, she had seen him by torch-light; but either she was marvel-

ously deceived, or the hair which waved over his forehead was not black, but a rich chesnut; his eyes, too, resentfully and accusingly as they were bent upon her, betrayed not, to her thinking, any mixture of malice.

"Still," thought she, "the *man* must be in his nature diabolical, to have excited such aversion in the gentle heârt of Wilhelm, and such deadly mistrust in the bosom of Vallensteïn. It might well be construed perverseness, were I to confess myself less unfavourably impressed by his appearance than I ought to be. Besides, the impious insult he has committed marks his malignity. Justly, indeed, might Vallensteïn chide me, could I harbour the slightest indulgence for such a monster!"

Nevertheless she could not bring herself to believe that any important danger threatened her from the form she had beheld in the chapel; but, seeing Vallensteïn was resolved to predict evil, she

forbore to press the argument. The following morning his brow was unusually clear and cloudless: in answer to a proposal of the Baroness, that they should ride together, he readily acquiesced; but suddenly recollecting a difficult passage in Dante, whose obscurity they had agreed to endeavour jointly to conquer—

"Or," said he, "shall we content ourselves with the fine air and noble view from the ramparts this morning? Methinks I am in the mood to attack and conquer the old Florentine."

"With all my heart, Casimir."

This arrangement was scarcely settled, when old Mark, who was in attendance, and who, like most of the superior domestics of the castle, had held his post from the time of Baron Ulric, said,

"My lady, what do you think Frederic saw this morning? I dare say your ladyship will never guess. Why, he saw my late young lord's fine Persian charger,

poor Mirza, with a gallant-looking gentleman on his back."

"It's a lie, old man!" cried Vallenstein, his eyes flashing fire.

"Not so, Count," said the Baroness gravely; "you mean, I imagine, to say that Frederic was mistaken. Retire, my honest Mark."

"I own," said the Count, answering the look of grieved inquiry with which Louisa beheld him, "I own it *does* chafe me to listen to the stupid fabrications of folly. I know that Mirza is, as I have told you, in my father's stables at Prague, for the cure of a musquet wound he received in his shoulder."

"I wonder," replied the Baroness, "how Frederic could fall into such an error; he assisted in the training of Mirza."

"However that may be, madam, I tell you, Mirza is at Prague, if *I* am worthy of belief. Frederic, nevertheless, may be a more credible voucher; in

which case I beg that my assertion may no way prejudice the testimony of your groom."

"Casimir, Casimir! how often shall such scenes as these recur? am I to look on them as precursors of future happiness? I fear not. You know not, since the day on which I yielded my consent to our union, how often you have compelled me to ask myself, Is this the same Casimir to whom I so fearlessly committed the peace of my life?"

"My angel! you are unversed in the rough and moody nature of man; and, therefore, you judge your Casimir too severely. Your brother's temper was even softer than your own, and Father Felix has the ductile and infantine simplicity of babyhood. You compare me with these, and well may the little sallies of a disposition somewhat impetuous appear atrocious."

"No—I compare you with yourself—with what you were ere I promised to be

yours.' Can you blame me, Casimir, if I am led to the question, whether still greater security may not produce a still more grievous change?"

"Powers of heaven! what a harsh conclusion! And what must I think, Louisa, of your love—of your confidence? By my soul, madam, you do not love me! you have scanned my character with the cold, keen, detecting eye of an analyst! You have searched my bosom for its errors, and it has been your study, your business to magnify the common failures of humanity into crimes! Oh, Louisa! did you truly love me, instead of aggravating the errors of your Casimir, you would have gently traced them to their source; you would have found that he is anxious, that he *is* unhappy, and, therefore, he is irritable."

"Unhappy, Casimir!"

"Yes, Louisa. I would have waited till suspense was past—I would have spared you the knowledge, till of neces-

sity it *must* reach you; but, as I may not rely on your indulgence, I will explain what may palliate, at least, the crimes of Casimir. Till the night (Oh hour of happy presage!) when you uttered the words, 'It is enough, Casimir!' you saw me as I am: the very day after brought me a packet from my noble, my magnanimous father, to tell me, that through the circumvention of some cowardly, envious foes, his credit with the Emperor is shaken. Vallensteïn is lord of himself. The private Bohemian Baron, who could by a wave of his hand, a simple effort of his will, bring fifty thousand armed men into the field, may laugh at man's changing aspect—and he does laugh. But his son may have cause to groan. I am not, like my father, sufficient to myself—*my* soul's peace is surrendered into the hands of another."

"And, on that point, my Vallensteïn, what can you have to dread from any of these political vicissitudes?"

"Every thing, Louisa! Will the Emperor, think you, bestow the Baroness of Marchfeldt on the son of a disgraced man? Believe it not. Now, madam, hear all my exculpations, and then pronounce my doom, for we approach the crisis, and decision will soon become necessity. Wolfsteïn, the crafty, insidious, intriguing Wolfsteïn, he it is, who, snake-like, has wound himself into the counsels of Ferdinand, and shed his venom into the Imperial breast. My proof of this arrived an hour before my feelings so unpardonably exploded in your presence; and it was on that day, when my heart was stung and wounded by the injuries of my noble father, that Louisa, with cool, inflexible barbarity, debarred me from the consolation of her presence, and abandoned me to the writhing misery of my own thoughts. Now, Louisa, pronounce judgment between thee and me."

"I should have been less stern, indeed, my Casimir, had I known what you now

tell me: but leave these concealments—for in them at last lies the fault."

"Wolfsteïn intruded himself last night into the chapel on the Island, to profane the solemn rite, to mock your brother's memory, to insult you, and, above all, to insult me. The temper of a saint would hardly stand firm against so detestable an outrage: but it rests not there—he comes for mischief. My mind is racked and lacerated by evil presages.

"How could you carry this load upon your heart? Know you not the dearest privilege affection owns, is that of sharing and lessening the pains and sorrows of its object?"

"True, Louisa, but your power extends still farther: by the utterance of a very few words, you can at once annihilate *my* sorrows. Louisa," said he, in a voice softened almost to a whisper, and pressing her hand to his heart, "they will snatch this little hand from Casimir, and give it

to another.—Shall they, Louisa?—Tell me—shall they?"

"Never, Casimir!"

"Then, Louisa, I will tell thee a secret, my love.—Thou must give it me now! Ay," said he, replying to her look of startled inquiry, "now—or never!"

"I do but await the Emperor's consent, and I am yours; but urge not, I pray, Casimir, a precipitation which would be unsuitable and indelicate."

"Well, Louisa, be it as you will. But remember, if I am indeed master of your heart, you will repent this punctilio."

"There is so much of justice and goodness in Ferdinand, and he is so bound to your father, by every tie of gratitude, that I cannot think his princely nature will allow itself to be duped to the prejudice of so proved a friend, so faithful a servant, as your illustrious father."

"Gratitude, Louisa!—When you are entrusted with a peep into the vocabulary

of a statesman, show me the word, if you can find it there!"

"Well, Vallensteïn, we will, at least, prepare for the worst: a day or two must decide this matter. Should your father's enemies prevail, and his retirement from command be the result, my hesitation is over, and Father Felix shall pronounce for us the nuptial benediction."

She had scarcely uttered this promise, when Rupert, with a large packet of papers, hastily entered the room.

"My lord," said he, "a courier is now at the gate, despatched by your noble father: he has rode day and night from Prague."

"From Prague, Rupert! Now then, Louisa, condemn my precipitation. The plot has reached its catastrophe."

He seized the first paper which presented itself, on which were inscribed these words, "The Emperor's star declines! Treachery triumphs! My troops are disbanded, and I am a private man!—

Albert Wenceslaus Eusebius Vallenstein."

"Here is the test, Louisa. What say you now?"

"I say, Casimir, that in three days, Father Felix shall ratify my promise, in the same spot where it was made!—In three days, Casimir, we will defy the malice of man to separate us!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"But, oh! how vile an idol proves this god!"
Shakespeare.

It is not to be believed that the heart of the Baroness was not troubled and agitated on thus finding herself hurried into the adoption of a measure, on which the whole future of her earthly existence must depend: the morning's explanation, nevertheless, diminished her solicitude respecting the temper of Vallensteïn, and even inclined her to condemn herself for the rigour and austerity with which she had marked her sense of his conduct. She looked back to the time when *her* temper, calm and lofty as it was, yielded to the suspense and uneasiness caused by the finding of Casimir's picture, and she convicted herself of injustice and cruelty to the being she best loved; but retro-

spection was idle and fruitless, since Vallenstein seemed to remember only, that in three days Louisa would be his for ever!—His father's wrongs, his own resentments and anxieties, all the disappointments of ambition, vanished before this bright anticipation: every word, every look, every action, betrayed his triumphant happiness, and twenty times a day he would ask his betrothed bride, with half playful reproach, if she too was not happy, as he remarked the mild and pensive expression which dwelt upon her brow, contrasting the tumultuous delight which his own impetuous nature exhibited.

"Casimir, ask my actions! If I loved you not, even the injunctions of my sainted Wilhelm would never have united my fate with yours.—You are my choice."

Well he knew that thus it was, yet he was never weary of winning from her such confessions; they were the music in which his heart delighted, and sometimes, with

the fond folly of love, he would procure a repetition of them by crying, "I heard you not—speak it again, Louisa."

Louisa's was not in truth, by many, the first female heart which had acknowledged his power, but his victories were usually despised as soon as gained, either from the ease with which they were achieved, or the small value attached to the object acquired; it was now that he felt himself a conqueror in the proudest sense of the word. Still Vallenstein appeared to be possessed by the dread, that some fatality might yet snatch his treasure from his grasp, ere it was finally secured to him. Every horn that sounded near the draw-bridge to announce the approach of some stranger, every peal of the castle bell, nay each time the door of the apartment opened, his eyes assumed a wild inquiring expression, and the colour of his cheek would vary:—if she proposed riding, walking, sailing,

"After Thursday," was ever the reply;

"then we shall be beyond the power of Fate,—then we may laugh at all contingencies."

The Baroness beheld only in this fearful solicitude the excess of his affection, and made little attempt to oppose, or conquer whims which were born of such a parent.

"It is this affection," thought she, "that makes, that must make my happiness! Why then should I thwart it?"

The eve of that day which was to terminate these anxieties, and seal for ever the fate of the Lady of Marchfeldt, was now arrived:—they were engaged in a game at chess, in which both were adepts, and the Baroness was on the point of giving her future lord check-mate, when Father Felix entered, saying,

"I am glad, my children, that your nuptials are to take place to-morrow, since it seems that the Emperor has expressed some displeasure at your delay, my daughter; wherefore, your uncle of Er-

denheïm has despatched your faithful Conrade to urge your immediate presence at Vienna.—Here he is."

As Felix uttered these words, the Count started from his seat, and turned to the *croisée*.—Conrade entered, and bending his knee before his mistress, presented her the letter of which he was the bearer, offering at the same time, with tears in his eyes, his humble congratulations on the auspicious event which had been announced to him by Father Felix.

"There, my good Conrade," said the Baroness, "pay your duty to your new master, whom you will love for the sake of your old one.—Casimir, I need not recommend the faithful domestic of our Wilhelm to your kindness;—you know and value him already."

Conrade meanwhile looked wildly around, as one who sought for that which was not visible. The Baroness attributed the behaviour of Vallensteïn, who still remained fixedly at the window, to the

emotion produced by the presence of one who had so often assisted in his acts of kindness and affection for his lamented friend. Impressed by this idea, she approached, and tenderly taking his hand,

"My Casimir," said she, "bid Conrade welcome. I rejoice that he is come to assist in the festival of our union."

"And I," replied the Count, roughly shaking off her hand, "I curse, bitterly curse the hour of his return to Marchfeldt! He has ruined me!"

And thus saying, with his arms folded, he turned full round, and leaning his back against the side of the recess where he stood, gazed in deadly defiance on the astonished countenance of Conrade, who exclaimed,

"Saints and angels! What is this? Sir Warbeck of Wolfstein!"

The Baroness, already agitated and dismayed by the strange rudeness with which Casimir had flung her hand from him, had sunk into a seat; but now she

started up, and stood pale and motionless as monumental marble:—she struggled an instant with the shock, and then, with the cold composure of a stunned mind, she pointed towards him, and said,

"Conrade! Who is that?"

"I need no sponsor, madam:—I am Warbeck of Wolfsteïn."

She passed her hand across her brow: "I understand!" said she.—"Then begone, thou base and impious hypocrite!"

"Louisa," said he, with a look of ineffable insolence, "the entrance of that fellow confused me for a moment—and you too:—you are bewildered! Take time, and recollect yourself! Recollect that you are *mine!* Your whole soul is mine! You are not weak enough to believe that the shallow ceremony, the idle words, that old man was to mutter over us to-morrow, had a charm in them! No! The mysterious union of heart with heart has already taken place between

us. They may not be torn asunder:—you are *irrevocably* mine! I command you, lady, to suffer that rite to take place on the instant! I will not wait for the morrow!—Father! the chapel is already prepared:—attend us thither."

And he attempted to seize the hand of the Baroness. The good Friar, who until then had stood as it were dreaming and entranced, now exclaimed,

"Desist, thou wicked man! Thou hast already sufficiently polluted that sacred place with thy mockeries! Never shalt thou enter it more!"

"Hear me!" said Louisa, "and it is the last word I will ever address to thee! Quit my presence on the instant,—and let the next deliver this castle from thy abhorred footsteps; or, by the duty and love I owe my brother's outraged memory, I will not forbear a single moment longer! Thou shalt be forced hence!"

"I will not so far urge your gentle nature, Baroness; I will retire unforced,

and leave you to the solace of your own reflections.—Extract the arrow as you may. By my soul, it grieves me to discover that you too are a mere woman, governed by a name—a sound. You love me, Louisa! Your whole heart is mine!—A few hours, and by your own voluntary dedication your person would have been mine also! But my name, forsooth, is Wolfsteïn! Weak, shallow woman! But mark me, madam; my triumph is only delayed that it may be more brilliant: half its lustre, but for this accident, would have reflected on the execrated name of Vallensteïn.—Now, madam, look to yourself! We shall meet again!"

The door closed after him; he crossed the drawbridge on foot, ordering Rupert to follow with the horses, and in a very short time this dissembler was far from the precincts of Marchfeldt. Nothing could exceed the confusion of mind in which the Baroness was involved: breathless and motionless, she continued gazing

on the door through which Wolfsteïn disappeared; when she heard the clang which accompanied the letting down the bridge, she breathed.

"Praised be the Virgin!" murmured she, "he is gone then!"

The Friar approached, and would have offered some consolation; but, seating herself, she waved him off with a ghastly smile, and remained immersed in a troubled ocean of thought, awaiting the subsiding of the internal tumult, since to reflect or act to the purpose was at that moment equally impossible. Conrade believed it his duty to ascertain, and, if necessary, to enforce the retreat of his master's foe from the castle, and had therefore, when he quitted the apartment, followed close on his footsteps. Wolfsteïn, having passed the bridge, turned, and perceiving the vigilance of this faithful domestic,

"Ah! art thou there, honest Conrade?" he cried: "thou hast been a bird

of ill omen to me; when next we meet we will settle our mutual account.—Till then fare thee well."

"My father," said the Baroness, breaking the silence which for nearly two hours she had maintained, "Did not that man threaten me as he departed? Methinks he did; but no matter. Will you not sprinkle and purify the chapel and the tomb, dear father? You cannot perform the sacred service there again till it is cleared from the pollution that man's presence has left."

"Well thought on, my daughter: I will about it immediately, for this night shall be by me devoted to thanksgivings for thy miraculous escape."

"Ay, father, the incense and the holy water are ready for the lustration.—What a deed of horror were they prepared to hallow!—I will share your devotions to-night; and, father, let the hangings, and garlands, and vases be removed."

"They shall, my daughter."

Conrade now tapped at the door, and was admitted: he came to remind the Baroness that Baron Erdenheim's despatches were important, and he feared, lest in the confusion which had followed his arrival, they might be forgotten. Father Felix opened the letter, which contained a brief but very urgent expostulation with the Lady of Marchfeldt, on the little respect her delayed journey implied for the commands of the Emperor.

"It is true," observed the Baron, "that your late brother, in his doubtless well-grounded confidence, thought proper to leave your will unfettered; yet I will presume to remind you, that you are young, and that some deference for the advice of an old man, your near relation, who has long been intimately versed in the world's usages, to which you must be nearly a stranger, and who can have no object in view but your honour and advantage, might become you.—Albeit, I

say not this to the prejudice of your liberty; but his Imperial Majesty is displeased, and it is unseemly in so young a maiden to brave the displeasure of her sovereign."

"It is indeed most unseemly," said the Baroness, as Felix pronounced the words, "but my whole conduct has been an error: I have been dreaming,—it is high time I should be awake, and act as if I were so.—Father, purify the chapel, I beseech you, for this night's devotions. Spirit of my Wilhelm! How hast thou been outraged!—To-morrow my journey shall commence: it is but a day's anticipation, and we have nothing to prepare."

"Nay, my child," said the Friar gently, "you have yourself to prepare; you have been greatly shocked!' Rest but for a short season.—Conrade shall again to Vienna to announce your submission and speedy approach, but not to-morrow, dear daughter."

"Ay, to-morrow, father; and I will

not lose sight of Conrade. He has snatched me," and she shuddered, "from the very grasp of perdition!—I feel safer while he is near—but go I must from hence, where every thing is hateful. All around rebukes my wretched weakness: condemnation glares on me from every object.—Yes, yes, we will away to-morrow!"

Father Felix beheld the Baroness with grievous misgivings; the lifeless hue of her cheek, the unnatural stillness of her eyes, and the icy coldness of her hand, appalled him.

"What ails you, father? Is not all well? We are delivered from the snares of a villain! Are you not thankful?"

"Ay, dear daughter, I bless Heaven for it! But you are so pale, so cold, and calm.—Methinks I would fain see you weep, my child."

"No, no, father: I *am* weak, but not so weak as to permit that man's defeated villany to draw a tear from me; besides

you know," added she rapidly, " we have no time.—Where is Barbara? We must be busy—and linger not, my father. To the chapel! To the chapel!"

To the chapel he went, inexpressibly alarmed by the singularity of Louisa's manner. Assisted by the Sacristain, he betook himself to depriving this holy spot of such of its decorations as had been added in honour of the ceremony which would have been therein celebrated the following day but for the providential arrival of Conrade: the paintings, the hangings, the garlands, the massive gold plate, which loaded the altar, all were removed, and the lustration of every part of the chapel, especially of that stately marble structure which rose over the remains of Wilhelm and Blanche, was solemnly and very completely performed: for the good Felix, although he relied more on the spirit than the forms enjoined by his religion, did verily believe, that the presence of an evil hearted being

might have so far polluted the sanctity of that place, as to render such purification indispensable previous to the performance therein of any holy office. When all this was fulfilled, he returned to seek the Baroness: she was gone to her chamber, whither she had summoned her women, in order to apprize them of the following day's intended journey, and to hasten their preparations. When he tapped at the door, Barbara opened it, saying, with a face of consternation, "Oh! you are come, father! St. Ursula be praised for it! Look at my lady!—She is like a statue! She neither hears nor speaks!"

Father Felix approached her:—

"My daughter! my dear child!—speak to me!"

He had, but a few minutes before been contemplating the effigies of some of her ancestors;—the form which now stood before his eyes was hardly less white, less cold, less unconscious. He called

on her again, but the pale lips unclosed not, the eye remained fixed and glassy, the same ghastly silence prevailed. Felix with no steady hand ventured to open a vein of the marble arm, and, after some time, the blood came lingering forth, and something like feeling and consciousness returned, though no recognition of those around her. Her women laid her in bed, and all preparations for the journey of the morrow were suspended.

CHAPTER XV.

"If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile!"

Othello.

Casimir Vallenstein, amidst the tumultuous career of arms, had always leisure to think and feel. His was not that mere animal courage resulting from the absence of fear combined with an active and vigorous *physique.* He was the only son of a man on whom the eyes of all Europe rested, and he watched the steps of his father in his stately march of glory with profound admiration. If he had an idol on earth it was his father's fame; for himself, though ardent, brave, jealous of honour, he had no ambition, none at least of that ambition which desires to climb, nor did he cultivate any of the arts necessary to the success of a

climber: he was open as day, generous, manly, unsuspicious:—he held no distinguished post in his father's army, setting an example of moderation and single-heartedness to his fellow soldiers. Yet, let it not be supposed that such a father was blind to the merit of such a son. The mind of man is always a paradox of more or less difficult solution. The strangest phenomenon in that of the elder Vallensteïn was, that while every softer and kinder feeling of his nature tended towards, and centred in, his son, his ambition was individual; he felt intent on building, by his own energies, a name, such as not even his successor might aspire to emulate. Had Casimir, however, testified an ambition to rise, he would have been indulged, and such posts and distinctions granted him as he demanded; but as the Duke knew, from experience, that the disposition of a man has a governing influence on his destiny, and that, how-

ever such disposition may be warped or biassed, it will not essentially change, he was content to perceive his son's indifference for the acquisition of that which was the end and motive of his own existence,—a name which should echo through the world! Vallensteïn was convinced of his power with his noble father, and he used it gloriously, in mitigating his severities, in averting disgrace and punishment, in softening the hard conditions imposed by the conqueror on the conquered, in saving towns from sack and pillage, and in rescuing the labours of the peasant from the ruthless waste of the soldiery. This gentle soul dwelt in a fine, martial, manly frame; and, "when the blast of war breathed in his ears," a more ardent warrior than Casimir Vallensteïn rode not forth to the battle. The friendship he conceived for the drooping, dejected Wilhelm was a type of his nature: the first impulse was to pity, the next to

strengthen and support, if possible, the fragile stem, which he perceived the first rough blast might snap: he fostered, watched, encouraged him, and quickly succeeded in obtaining for him his father's indulgence. Whoever has had the happiness to promote another's welfare will know, that the protector naturally loves the protected. Vallensteïn began his acquaintance with Baron Marchfeldt by deeds of kindness; and the most tender affection rapidly sprung from such good seed.

When the news of Wilhelm's early fate came to Casimir, he was mounting Mirza, and about to proceed on a sortie which his father had committed to his discretion. He dashed the tear from his eye, and rode forward; for, unused to sorrow, he was glad to confound, in the effort and clamour of the moment, the pang which crossed his bosom, as he said—

"Art thou at rest then, my poor Wilhelm?"

He had seen many a gallant comrade fall by his side, yielded him the brief sigh, and forgot him;—but the memory of Wilhelm clung to his breast and painfully haunted him, till he felt almost indignant at the irksome perseverance of the pale intruder. It became the employment of his few musing hours to consider and re-consider such conversations as had ever passed between him and this now silent friend, even to the most insignificant word; and especially he recalled, with strong emotion, Wilhelm's desire for his union with the Lady of Marchfeldt. He dwelt on this subject till he satisfied himself that to espouse the sister of Wilhelm was his imperative duty; and that the silent homage of tender remembrance was mere mockery, if he shrank from the test prescribed.

In consequence of this decision, he resolved to visit Marchfeldt the first moment of relaxation from active service, and solicit the fair hand of its mistress.

"Beautiful I cannot doubt her," thought he, "if she resembles her miniature: it had all the pensive sweetness of her brother's countenance, mingled with an expression of majesty, which in him was wanting.—But, be she what she may, I am bent on performing the will of my friend, and not on pleasing myself."

It will be seen that a little of the temper of Quixotism governed the notions of the young soldier; and, perhaps, he would almost have chosen that the woman he conceived himself pledged to marry should have been gifted with some repellant qualifications; at least, that she had had less wealth, less beauty, less merit, that the purity of his sacrifice to the manes of her brother might have been unquestionable. From the hour that his mind was made up to this conclusion, he was almost wholly engrossed by the subject—his military duties were mechanically performed, and he became rest-

lessly weary of the length of the campaign: in short, his ideal mistress was the constant theme of his meditations; and, having been accustomed to regard all difficulties as surmountable, the dread of failure never once assailed him.

"Wilhelm has certainly mentioned his views to his sister, and probably she is even now indignant at my tardiness in promoting their fulfilment," said he, as he paced his apartment.—"When will this eternal campaign have an end?"

Wrapped in his own visionary projects, he never guessed that the mine was hollowing beneath the feet of his father, whose ruin was at that period the subject of many a secret conference in the cabinet of Vienna. The elder Vallensteïn coolly and steadily regarded the progress his foes were making.

"The clouds and vapours," said he, "have been long and gradually congregating. Now they are all accumulated, and the storm *must* therefore burst! Let

it burst!—I will wrap my cloak about me, and go home for awhile, only to come forth more gloriously."

This great man reposed implicit faith in omens and predictions; and the astrologer and rosicrucian were permitted to explore the weaknesses of a mind which was only entirely accessible to the professors of occult science:—*they* governed his calculations, and by their deductions he was now enabled to smile with ineffable contempt on the machinations of his foes—to look with cold patience on the ductility and ingratitude of Ferdinand—and to moralise, *en philosophe*, on the mutations of human life. The explosion, however, waited; the clouds hung suspended; and, except the intriguers, who were actually employed in working this change of fortune, few anticipated the event;—the fall of Vallensteïn was an idea too vast and comprehensive for the scope of the common mind. Casimir was confident in his father's destiny;

and whatever rumours floated near him he despised as idle murmurings; such envious whisperings as he supposed every great man's fortune must excite:—thus, totally unconscious of the point to which events were now fast tending, he seized with delight a moment for which he had been eagerly looking; when, without the abandonment of any important duty, he might bring his own designs into effect. He flew to his father, and, with the unrestrained frankness which ever marked their intercourse, opened his heart. He had anticipated no impediment, nor did he encounter any. A short leave of absence was freely granted; and young Vallenstein, mounted on his favourite charger, pursued his way, attended only by a couple of grooms, towards the banks of the Raab. In proportion as he approached the goal of his wishes, a slight damp fell upon his confidence; he remembered well that there was something awful in the beauty of Louisa of Marchfeldt, and be-

gan asking himself a few uneasy and unwonted questions: in fact, the courage which had never faltered in the presence of mortal man, seemed hardly competent to the enterprise on which he was now bent. He remembered, much to his satisfaction, the vicinity of the Abbey of St. Guthred to Marchfeldt castle. Its abbot was a distant relative of his father, by whose interest he had been elevated to that sacred function. At St. Guthred's, therefore, he determined to take up his quarters, and from thence order his advances skilfully and discreetly. He did not deem it necessary to disclose to his venerable host the full purport of his visit in that neighbourhood; but the first evening of his arrival he spoke of Marchfeldt—of the affection he cherished for the late Baron; and contrived to collect from the Abbot many circumstances of a nature highly interesting to his feelings, as they respected the past, the present, and the future. Amongst the in-

stances which tended to prove the pious respect in which the Lady of Marchfeldt held her brother's memory, the dedication of the hermitage and chapel on the Isle of Willows was not forgotten, and every sentiment of Casimir's heart was gratified by learning, that, on the following evening, the chapel would be opened for the first time, for the celebration of mass, for the repose of the souls of Wilhelm and Blanche—a ceremony in which he might assist. The following morning he employed himself in reconnoitring the castle, which contained the arbitress of his fate. Delighted with interests and occupations so new to him, he was unwearied by this survey, and examined the fortress as carefully as though he had meant to take it by surprise. He wished, in fact, to catch a stolen view of its mistress, and did not watch in vain. As he stood at the end of an avenue which opened on the lawn, and commanded an angle of

the castle, he found the motion of his heart strangely accelerated by the sudden appearance of a lady on the ramparts. Her striking air of dignity, and her deep mourning, at once convinced him that the internal alarum gave no deceptive warning—it certainly was the sister of Wilhelm: but the quick palpitation was checked, as if by the touch of a torpedo, when Casimir saw that she was accompanied by a young man. The features of her attendant he was too far removed to scrutinise; but as his eye was directed with intense curiosity to the spot where stood the objects of his interest, he could perceive an air of mutual confidence that made his heart shrink within him;—he saw that the lady seated herself, her fingers being employed with her needle, but her mind apparently engaged on some book which her unknown companion, who reclined at her feet, was reading to her; and he saw, or fancied, that ever and anon the stranger, forget-

ful of his book, would fall into a long pause, and indulge himself with an ardent, at least a settled, perusal of the countenance of the Baroness. Now, and for the first time, was Vallenstein enabled to form some notion of the doubts and torments of passion; for he had actually nurtured in his breast a fancy for Wilhelm's sister till it became a passion of the most predominant and engrossing potency. That she should pre-engage her affections was a contingency which had entirely escaped his prescience; and now that it smote so hard on his conviction, the sensation was intolerable. His eyes remained long riveted to that which he abhorred to look on: at length, turning dejectedly away, he retraced his steps along the avenue; and, taking Mirza from his groom, mounted him, and reached the grey and ivied walls of St. Guthred's in time to join the procession, which was that evening to meet the Lady of Marchfeldt at the chapel on

the Island. Such a warfare as that, whereof his bosom was now become the theatre had never before troubled its repose:—he hardly knew himself. In all the hitherto quick passing perturbations of his life he had invariably found a sovereign remedy in action.

"Even now," said he, "I have not the slow miseries of suspense to contend with—I am about to meet my fate! If the Baroness is attended to the chapel by the man whom I saw with her on the ramparts of her castle, I may observe them near enough to exchange conjecture for certainty."

His heart tossed by the winds, every thought of his mind afloat and wavering, he joined the holy brethren of St. Guthred's in their solemn procession, and in their train entered the chapel of the Island. As he bent his knee within that sacred place, the internal tumult obeyed for a moment that profound respect with which, though a soldier, he

ever approached the scene of religious worship. The memory of Wilhelm seemed almost palpably to meet him there, and shed into his bosom a sentiment of mingled awe and tenderness. The solemnity which reigned around, the blaze of tapers, the hoarse rush of the autumn wind through the now yellow branches of the grove which sheltered the edifice, the sighing swell of the Raab, and finally, the full deep chorus of voices of the brothers of St. Guthred, bursting forth in mournful chantings, all spake a language calculated at once to calm and elevate the spirit, and to forbid the vulgar intrusion of earthly anxieties, earthly speculations. A holy influence seemed breathing around, and Vallenstein felt soothed and fortified, almost wondering at the serenity with which he now awaited the arrival of the train, whom the waters of the Raab were bearing towards the Island, as the nearer and nearer stroke of the oar announced.

At length the Baroness and her suite entered the chapel: he whose inauspicious appearance on the ramparts of the castle had so unexpectedly damped the hopes of Vallenstein, led the lady of Marchfeldt by the hand:—that was no pleasing sight; but what were Vallensteïn's feelings when, as the broad blaze of the consecrated tapers fell on the face of the stranger, he beheld Wolfsteïn! He uttered an exclamation which Wolfsteïn (who was not addicted to religious absorption, and who, being equally indifferent to the ceremony and its cause, had all his senses awake and alert) heard, and directing his eye towards the spot from whence it issued, perceived immediately the vicinity of one, whom, of all God's creatures, he least desired to encounter. Presence of mind, however, forsook him not: to prove that his success was already beyond contesting seemed his best means of baffling and

discouraging the enemy. Well assured that the Count had not forgotten the conversation which took place between him and Wilhelm after the battle of Halle, he took from his bosom the picture which formed the subject of it, and did not replace it, till, having caught the eye of the Baroness, he signified by a fond and grateful glance that she entirely acquiesced in his possession of this treasure. As Vallensteïn looked on Louisa, scarcely could he persuade himself that what was passing before him was no illusion: there was something in her fine countenance that seemed so to contradict her actions.

"Ah," said he, "how wonderful! How magnificent a residence does that false and hollow soul inhabit! Never have I seen a form, a face that might vie with thine! But, fie upon it! It is all vile mockery! And canst thou uplift thy deceitful voice in the anthem? And darest

thou thus insult thy brother's spirit, thou lovely image of fraud and frailty? Oh, how I hate thee!"

Meanwhile, Wolfsteïn, in the midst of his triumph, trembled to reflect what might be the result of his dreaded rival's presence in the neighbourhood at this most critical juncture, and half a thought determined him that nothing could so fatally assist in undermining his own projects as loss of time. The point then to be carried was immediate union with the Baroness, ere Vallensteïn should discover the manœuvre which had procured him so firm a footing at Marchfeldt. He was a man of such extensive and complicated intrigue; his secret connexions were so universally dispersed, and, although ostensibly an independent and single being, he was, in fact, individually implicated in so many of the state fluctuations then occurring, that few things passed in the different cabinets of Europe without his

knowledge or perhaps his participation. He knew, for he was assisting in the plot which had for its object the downfall of the elder Vallensteïn, that this event was near at hand. The Duke of Bavaria, and the Capuchin Friar, Father Joseph, were, indeed, its more avowed authors; but Wolfsteïn's communications supplied their fire with fuel. He had no particular animosity towards the elder Vallensteïn, nor any direct interest to serve in compassing his ruin; his hatred of Casimir was stimulus sufficient: besides, to work the fall of such a man was, in itself, a glorious testimony to his own destructive genius. Of his knowledge of the great political change about to take place it has been seen how adroitly he availed himself, in thereby extorting, as it were, the consent of the Baroness to their speedy nuptials.

Neither of these rivals quitted the chapel on the night of the celebration

of its opening ceremony in the most enviable frame of mind. Grief and wrath contended in the breast of Vallensteïn: he would fain have hated the sister of Wilhelm, and he almost flattered himself it was hatred which made his cheek burn; and his heart beat against his side, as though it would have burst its lodging. Wolfsteïn felt his cool crafty spirit shaken and appalled as he had never before on any occasion experienced: he hazarded one manœuvre, however, which nothing but his perfect knowledge of his adversary could have justified. Having seated the Baroness in her barge, he gave certain directions to Rupert, who overtook the brethren of St. Guthred's as in slow procession they moved homewards. Approaching Count Vallensteïn respectfully,

"My Lord," said he, "the Chevalier Warbeck of Wolfsteïn greets you well. He hopes that the idle petulances kindled accidentally between you slumber in

your breast, as they do in his: he entreats you, in token of perfect amity, to gladden the castle of Marchfeldt with your presence, and guaranties your welcome from its peerless mistress. Doubly will she welcome you as the friend of the late Baron, and the guest of Wolfsteïn."

"Insult upon insult!" cried Vallensteïn, mad with indignation. "I will not stain my knighthood by injuring thee, thou vassal of a fiend! But hence! lest I should forget myself and thee!"

His first thought was to quit immediately the precincts of Marchfeldt, replunge himself in war, and consign to oblivion his frustrated projects; then, he would lie in wait for Louisa, would upbraid her with the foul mockery she was guilty of, in offering up masses for the peace of one, to whose memory her actions betrayed such flagrant disregard.

"Yes, if she *has* a heart, I will probe it! Yes, she shall hear me out! I will

show her to herself! I will speak daggers to her! Ay, and if Wolsteïn bears that, if his cold hard nature kindles not at that, she *must* detest him! He has murdered my peace! I will force him to desire my blood! I will speak such words to a woman as manhood must recoil at. He shall fight me!"

Tired of pacing the narrow limits of hi apartm ent, he descended to the aisles of St. Guthred's church, where his troubled wanderings found wider scope; and as he brooded over schemes of vengeance, or even muttered his menaces aloud, a voice seemed occasionally to mingle with his abstractions, and say, "What place is this for such unhallowed musings!" But Casimir was desperate,—he saw nothing as he was wont to do,—he was no longer himself. His restlessness urged him early forth; and, mounted on Mirza, he pursued his way towards the village of Marchfeldt. He alighted in the

wood where Wolfsteïn's supposed robbery took place, and which lay between the abbey and the village, and throwing his bridle to the groom, ordered him to return to St. Guthred's and await him there; that he would return on foot, but when he could not tell: "To-day, to-morrow,—in a week, perhaps—in short, I know not."

He walked along the bank till he found himself opposite the Isle of Willows, and close to Stephen's cottage: he tapped at the door, and the feeble voice of the sick wife bade him lift the latch and enter. He requested a draught of milk, for his mouth was parched and feverish. The two little boys were busily engaged with their breakfast—but Alice cried,

"Wilfred, get upon the stool, and reach the gentleman the pitcher of milk from the cupboard."

When he had quenched his thirst—

"It seems, dame," said he, "that your door opens readily to the wander-

ing stranger, and that you are no niggard of your simple store."

"And if I were so, sir, I should ill deserve the comfort and plenty in which it pleases God and our dear lady to maintain us."

"Is the Baroness of Marchfeld charitable then?"

"She is like the sunshine and dew of Heaven! The very sight of her brings a blessing."

"Alas," thought Casimir, "it has shed a curse upon me!"

"You seem a stranger, sir," continued the good woman; "but I suppose you are bound for the castle: belike it is your intent to attend the wedding, which, there is talk, will soon take place. The blessed angels watch over it, and grant our beloved lady a lord deserving her! They say, indeed, that the Count Casimir dotes on her; that his eyes are never off her; and that, when she speaks, he listens for

all the world as if some beautiful music was sounding in his ears. But I know not,—he may make never the better a husband for being so fond a lover, as I tell Stephen."

"Who?" cried Casimir, "*who*, good dame? Who, did you say, was about to espouse the Baroness?"

"Why, sir, the Count Casimir of Vallensteïn, the great gentleman's son who beats all the Emperor's enemies. Our poor young Baron, rest his soul! took a fancy that he should marry his sister. I suppose they helped each other to fight at the wars, and so they got great friends. I have no business to speak, to be sure; but I always think Lord Wilhelm had little to do to choose a husband for his sister."

"Are you sure there is no mistake, my good dame? Are you quite certain that the person now at the castle is Count Casimir of Vallensteïn?"

"Oh yes, sure, sir! As certain as that you stand there."

"And, on what do you ground this certainty?"

"Dear me, sir, you are wonderful hard of belief, methinks! Why—let me see.—The first that ever told me who he was, was my lady's woman Barbara, when she came with medicines from the castle; and then old Sigismond—and then, Lord! I know not who else! But the Baroness and the Count have come to see me more than once, and staid ever so long. *She* called the gentleman, Casimir. She knows, I warrant, who she is going to be married to."

"If she does not, she shall know!" muttered Vallensteïn. "False, crafty villain! I'll cross your machinations yet!"

Buried in thought, he rose to quit the cottage, but turning at the door, he said,

"If I understand you right, dame, you are no friend to this marriage?"

"Nay, sir! The saints forbid that I should be its enemy! But you see, sir, as I lie here, I keep pondering and pondering, as it were, on what may befall. Old Sigismond too,—he's a wise man, is Sigismond, as I tell Stephen; one wink of Sigismond's eye is as good as an hour of another man's talk."

"And what says he, good dame?"

"Why, for that matter he does not say much; he never does—he's not one of your talkers, is not Sigismond.'

"What does he think then?"

"Why, I take it, he thinks no great things of the young Count."

"Why, does he suspect any thing?"

"What should he suspect? No, no, I fancy it is past suspicion that he's putting a mask on a bad temper, as many a man has done before him during courting time. I am nothing but an ignorant woman, sir, but the neighbours, foolish folk, will have it that Alice can see as fai—ay, a little farther, peradventure, than those that brag

of their wisdom. Now, sir, I'll ask you one question. Did you ever know a man, gentle or simple, good for aught, that a child would not look at?"

She put her head through the curtain.

"Ay, there they are, little trouble-some varlets, clinging to your skirts. For shame, Wilfred! Let the gentleman alone, Leonard! But, as I was saying,— when the Count came in, those two lads would cower behind the bed, and neither bribing nor coaxing drew them nigh him. For my part, *I say*, that has an ugly look with it, let Stephen laugh as he will."

"You are right, dame," cried Vallenstein; "the test is infallible! And you are two honest little fellows," said he, patting their heads, and parting their curly ringlets, at the same time putting a dollar into the hand of each.

"It is possible, dame, that I may call again at your cottage, if you give permission."

"Ay do, and welcome, sir," said the sapient Alice; and Casimir recrossed the humble threshold, the thoughts and opinions with which he entered it having undergone a total revolution.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts."
Shakspeare.

VALLENSTEÏN'S indignation was now all centred in the man who had, by so base a subterfuge, destroyed his hopes.—The intelligence of the good Alice, however, redeemed them from total annihilation.

"It may be yet," thought he, "that her affections remain free. This may be a pure sacrifice to her brother's will.—Inclination *may* have no share in it.—Yet, methinks, she had not the air of one compelled. Sure those smiles were spontaneous. Happy villain!—Would that one such look might beam on me!"

All that day and the succeeding one, he lingered about the castle, greatly marvelling that neither Wolfsteïn nor the

Baroness came forth. He kept as much as possible unseen by the domestics, lest the appearance of a stranger lurking nigh the castle might arouse suspicion, and occasion yet further caution.

Father Felix, from time to time, sallied forth on his mule, which carried him mechanically, for the holy man's optics were generally engaged with a book, or turned inwards in some act of meditation. More than once Casimir was tempted to accost him, and unravel to him the whole web of iniquity, for he had learned from Wilhelm to reverence his simple, spotless character. His patience worn, and his mind irritated by waiting so long in vain for the opportunity so ardently sought, he had even followed the Friar some distance, resolved to reveal himself, and unmask Wolfsteïn. Still the desire he felt to surprise and confound his adversary, and to behold, with his own eyes, the effect of the discovery on the heart and conduct of the

Bardness, withheld him. The day on which the return of Conrade to the castle had anticipated all these intentions, Vallenstein met, in his wanderings, the groom he had sent back to St. Guthred's, who came in search of him with a packet of papers. They retired together to the wood, and there, with sensations difficult to describe, did Casimir peruse the following letter from his father :—

"Prove yourself my son, by disdaining either surprise or resentment when you learn that I am returned to my palace at Prague, a private man! Yes, Casimir, I have received my dismissal from the Emperor!—My troops are dispersed. Yesterday I disbanded 15,000 of the finest cavalry in Europe; but to-day am I greater than I was yesterday. Yesterday I called Ferdinand master; to-day I am lord of myself—no despicable sovereignty! The Emperor gently sued and besought me to relinquish my command, for he dared not demand it.—I

smiled and complied. Bavaria, the Capuchin, and *another*, under the auspices of the politic Richelieu, have done this. Now mark me, my son!—It is not the command of armies, the predominance in senates, the pomp of dominion, which constitute man's greatness, though they be splendid consequences thereof. It is the calm and lofty spirit, which can, with equal temper, take up and lay down these things. When Vallensteïn would contemplate true greatness, he turns his eyes inward, and seeks it in his own soul! I regard the present political revolutions with the same coolness as I trace those whose authors and victims exist no longer, save in the records of history, and look onward to the catastrophe with the same patient inquiry. I explain this to you, that you may not deem it a point of duty to hasten hither. At your leisure, and when your own plans are fulfilled, and not till then, come to your friend and father—Vallensteïn."

"Powers of justice! Can it be possible?—Can it be that this godlike man is yielded up a sacrifice to the narrow winding policy of state intrigue?"

The event seemed to Casimir so prodigious, so impossible, that for an instant he stood confounded, as though the earth before him was suddenly rent asunder by the shock of an earthquake, and he stood on the brink of the new-born precipice. His first impulse was to fly to his father; but in so doing he must abandon the sister of Wilhelm to the embraces of a fiend: he stood suspended and irresolute—he knew not what to do. He read and re-read his father's letter: —at length, turning to his groom,—

"Go," said he, "to Prague. Tell my noble father I will endeavour to despatch the business which detains me in this neighbourhood. In a few days it *shall* be despatched, and then I will hasten to him."

Having thus dismissed the groom, he

sate down for a while to reflect on the measures it now behoved him to pursue in order to bring his purpose to immediate effect, since he was resolved to procrastinate no longer. He determined to seek for aid at the cottage where the treachery of Wolfsteïn had been first revealed to him; and, repeating his petition for a draught of milk, again visited Dame Alice. The good woman began gently chiding him for his liberality to her boys, and the little urchins greeted him with many signs of good-will, so that he found himself at home in Stephen's cottage.

"It should seem, dame," said he, "that the lady of the castle and the bridegroom elect are almost as good housekeepers as yourself."

"Ay," said Alice, "so I hear. It is not their wont to be so; but Stephen tells me they have never walked or rode forth since they were at the little chapel on the Island; and I could almost weep

at the thought, that when next I see my dear, sweet lady, all these her fine domains, all we her vassals; ay, and what is more than all, her own precious self, will have become another's!"

"What!" cried Vallenstein: "is it so near at hand?—When does the marriage take place?"

"That's a secret, sir."

"The marriage will be private, then?"

"Why, there are no guests bidden, I believe, and I am sure there is no time to collect them now. Well-a-day!—As old Sigismund says, one lives to see many a change, and but few of them for the better; for, says he, time was when the wedding of a great lady made some noise in the country; when guests came flocking from far and near—knights and barons, and gay ladies—when there were hawkings, and huntings, and joustings, and mysteries, and mummeries!—when there was state in the saloon, and mirth and wassail in the hall. But, says Sigismund, to see a great lady sneak into

her chapel, without pomp or state, with scarce a page to hold her train for her, it's an ugly thing, Alice, said he, that you may take for a certainty! However, says he, send Stephen up with store of green rushes this very evening, to strew the passage from the hall to the chapel. It's a mercy, says he, that even so much is done; but I believe there will be the new altar clock and gold plate, if there is nothing else."

"Oh! then Stephen takes the rushes this evening."

"Ay, marry, he is cutting them now."

"Then," said Casimir, "the inference I draw is that the bridal takes place to-morrow!"

"Hush! hush!" cried Alice, putting her head through the curtain: "What could I be thinking of to mention those rushes? And, by my troth, you must be a sharp one to find it out by such a trifle. How could I foresee that my just talking of the rushes would have told you any thing about my lady's wedding."

"No, certainly," replied he, "you are not answerable for my guesses; you very faithfully refused to betray your secret: —What could you do more? Now, God bless you, dame," said he, rising, "it is probable we shall meet no more; but," added he, approaching her couch, "I shall never forget what I owe your kindness;" and, putting into her hand a purse of dollars, "as an earnest that I shall not, accept this from me."

"My kindness forsooth!—What sort of a country do you come from? There must be a famine in it sure, if they pay a purse of gold for a draught of milk! It is not our custom, however," said she in the honest pride of independence, "and I won't begin it."

"Keep it then, at least, Alice, in token of a stranger's good will."

And he fled from the cottage.—He could now regulate his plan of operation: "There shall be, at least, one unbidden guest at the wedding, to-morrow," thought he, as he bent his way towards the chapel.

The gate of the porch which led from the village was open, and Casimir entered; he retreated, however, immediately, and unseen, into one of the cloisters, for his entrance happened at the moment when the Friar and the Sacristan were disrobing the chapel of its festive trappings; a sight which filled him with consternation.

"Sure, I am not too late," said he: "should it be so—but, no! I will not believe it!"

And he glided, as near as he dared, to those whose occupation so perplexed him. From time to time the voice of the Sacristan echoed along the vaulted aisles, but Father Felix silently assisted or directed him; he spoke only when compelled to speak, and then in a low, mournful accent. A variety of misgivings crowded on the thoughts of Vallensteïn, for he never dreamed that the discovery he meditated was anticipated; his chief apprehensions were, that either Wolfsteïn had contrived to hasten the ceremony,

and place himself beyond dread of de-
tection, or else that the Baroness was ill.
That some misfortune had occurred, the
dejected behaviour of the Friar rendered
indubitable.

"It seems a pity," said the Sacristan,
at length, as if thinking aloud, "that all
these gorgeous hangings should be put
up one day, and taken down the next,
and all for no use!—I am sure, if any
thing steps in between my lady and her
marriage, I shall begin to think I am to
see no more weddings in this chapel.
There was my young lord, and the Lady
Blanche, rest their souls! Neither your
Reverence nor I could have guessed that
that cold marble shrine was to be their
only marriage-bed!—Well, your Rever-
ence knows what is in the wind now, and
I may be an old fool with my guesses;
but my hand shakes so, I can hardly get
the nails out of the hangings."

"I beseech thee, Matthias," said Fe-
lix, "repress thy curiosity, natural as it
is, for the present; all will be well yet, I

doubt not :—but, my good brother, man's life is like the sky, sometimes bright and serene, then cloudy; and the moral storm, like the natural, though tremendous in explosion, relieves the air from foul and pestilential vapours. The marriage, as thou conjecturest, will never be ;—why it is broken, is no matter to thee, or any one."

Vallensteïn sought no farther intelligence, but he earnestly wished the Sacristan would retreat, and afford him an opportunity to confer with Father Felix. This, however, did not happen ; but the Friar, on quitting the chapel, expressed his intention of performing his devotions therein during the night ; Casimir therefore concealed himself, resolving to await the good man's return at the midnight hour.

END OF VOL. I.

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P3